


HONDA COUNTRY –  
RELOCALIZATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY IN NANWALEK ALASKA

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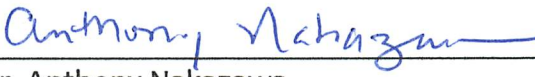
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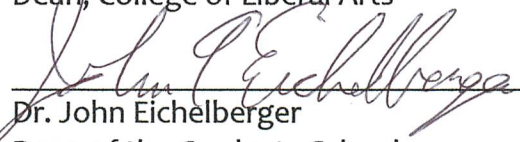
  
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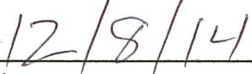
  
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HONDA COUNTRY -  
RELOCALIZATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY IN NANWALEK ALASKA

A  
DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty  
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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## Abstract

It should not be assumed that the introduction of a new technology automatically wipes out past cultural practices. Instead, it is often the case that these offerings are integrated into a current routine. For the Sugpiat of Nanwalek, Alaska, there is a constant need to negotiate between what to change and what to preserve.

My research explores how a cultural group judges a new technology based upon shared boundaries and understandings. I examine how the decision to accept all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) has allowed for increased participation in subsistence practices, effective resource management, and material and emotional reunification with those things that went before. Many of the activities and “places that count” are no longer merely fragments of memory for many in the village; rather, they are physical and contemporary in their importance. In my dissertation, I define relocalization and demonstrate how relocalization was made possible through purposeful decision-making and adaptive traditions and did not simply occur because of the existence of ATVs and their random internalization.



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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Research Questions



Figure 1.1 Nanwalek

This dissertation is centered on an Alaska Native community, the Sugpiat of Nanwalek. The community of Nanwalek has been one of the most successful in the entire Sugpiaq-Alutiiq region in retaining their cultural traditions and Native language (Davis 1984: 199). My research explores how the Sugpiat of Nanwalek determines the legitimacy of introduced technologies, specifically the local use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). These vehicles were first introduced in the 1970s to Nanwalek, and they are exclusively referred to as “Hondas” in the region.

My questions are largely focused on the ongoing technological and transportation transition within the community, which I studied by means of onsite investigation and the involvement of local participants from Nanwalek. I also incorporated the results of archival research and analyzed relevant literature. I was

particularly interested in the following questions: What social processes occur when people make the decision to accept a new technology? What kinds of consequences/ramifications do these decisions have for the community? Moreover, how have traditional Sugpiaq societal and subsistence practices changed, if any, with the introduction of Hondas?

## 1.2 The Place

The Native Village of Nanwalek sits on the Pacific Gulf of Alaska on the southern tip of the Kenai Peninsula. The geography of the region is rather ominous, as the coast on which Nanwalek lies is both beautiful and treacherous. The village is situated within a temperate rainforest and is bordered by the ocean on one side and the Kenai Mountains, which rise up 2000 feet from its shoreline, on the other. The average high temperature in the winter is in the 30s Fahrenheit, while in the summer it is in the high 50s Fahrenheit. The moderate temperatures are largely a result of a warm-water ocean current. The region also has frequent precipitation, fog, strong winds, and erratic seas.

The Kachemak Bay Sugpiat have had various settlements along the coast and have moved between these locations following a seasonal pattern (Csoba DeHass 2012: 7). Many of these seasonal sites are now uninhabited, including Koyuktolik (Dogfish Bay), To'gakvik (Port Chatam), Arulaik (Portlock), and Ayalik, among others. While these places are presently vacant, they should not be considered abandoned, as people

still often return to these sites (Pullar 2001: 83). The two currently inhabited Sugpiaq villages of the lower Kenai Peninsula are Nanwalek and Port Graham.

The village of Nanwalek was originally a seasonal settlement with abundant fish-runs through the nearby lake system, a large reef providing access to intertidal subsistence resources, a strategic location protected by mountains, and an excellent lookout site towards the ocean. Later, in 1786 (Black 2004: 107), it became the first Russian colony, Fort Aleksandrovsk, on the American mainland.

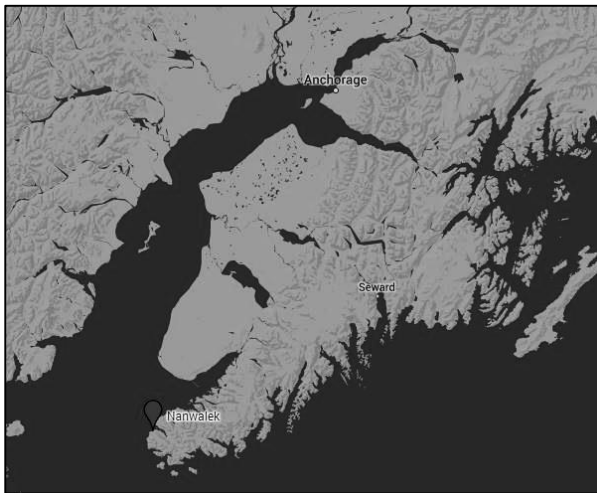


Figure 1.2 Kenai Peninsula Map

### 1.2.1 Subsistence

Nanwalek has always been vital as a base of operations for subsistence activities. There are dozens of routes leading to harvest areas, allotments, and other settlements from this location. As dogsleds were never used in the region before the arrival of Hondas, those things that were hunted or harvested had to be carried, dragged, or

floated to the village when not transported on traditional skin boats such as a kayak or the larger open-framed *angyaq*. Many ATV trails, easements, and previously used commercial logging roads, generally follow traditional routes. The purpose of trails in this region, both pre-contact as well as current trails, is twofold: both to access sites of personal significance and to increase availability of and subsequent success in hunting and harvest activities.



Figure 1.3 Regional Map

In the Nanwalek region, the new subsistence cycle starts in the springtime with the emergence of various plants. According to Nina Kvasnikoff (personal communication, March 24, 2014), spring is a time to gather fiddleheads, *kangkaq* (wild

celery, Sugt'stun spelling provided by Emilie Swenning) and dandelions, as well as to get *ipuk* (snails, Sugt'stun spelling provided by Kristina Kinneveauk), clams, seaweed, trout, rock cod, and spring king salmon from the ocean. Nowadays, it is also customary to harvest black bears (*Ursus americanus*) right after they have awakened from hibernation, as they have plenty of meat on them in the spring, without the fat. Nina Kvasnikoff explained that they used to get black bears in the fall in order to put bear tallow up for the winter, but due to warnings of its high cholesterol content, most people now avoid using tallow. In late spring and early summer, a courageous and surefooted few still get seagull eggs on Gull Island and on Elizabeth Island. The activity itself is a combination of rock climbing and fending off attacks from a multitude of large, angry seagulls. The people from Nanwalek also used to be able to harvest puffin eggs on Flat Island, but, in the past decades, puffins ceased to roost in the area.

The next phase of subsistence activities includes gathering chives, goosetongues, and *pitruskaq* (wild parsley, Sugt'stun spelling provided by Emilie Swenning). This is also the period when red salmon, also known as sockeye (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) start to run. The middle of summer is time to start picking berries and to harvest and preserve pink salmon, also known as humpback (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) and halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*). Technically, it is possible to get halibut any time of the year, similar to mountain goats, octopus, and sea lion, but most people prefer to do it in milder weather. In early fall, pink and dog salmon also known as chum (*Oncorhynchus keta*) give way to silvers (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) as people fill up their

smokehouses with the last of the year's fish. This is also a time to get fish eggs, which are then loose and easy to harvest.

Around October, hunters start going after ducks and seal, while others gather baidarkis (*Katharina tunicata*) from the reefs and rosehips from the mountainsides. Some resources, such as bidarkis can be picked all throughout the winter when the seaweed and the kelp are low. This is also a time to fish for winter kings, also known as Chinook, (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) until the next spring cycle starts again. Additionally, people gather various types of medicinal plants, and, in the past, many local resources such as sea otter pelts, puffin beaks, or shells were also used for ceremonial reasons.

#### 1.2.2 Trails



Figure 1.4 Nanwalek Trail Bridge

Nanwalek is only accessible by air or by boat, with the exception of a trail from the nearby village of Port Graham. These two remote coastal communities are located four miles apart and commuting between the villages is possible by air, boat, and by foot trail. The flight between the villages is a \$100 trip, and from takeoff to landing takes five minutes. While this may seem an odd choice of transportation, it is often the only option, especially in the winter when the seas are rough and the trail unusable.

In 1937, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) came to the English Bay region, and with the help of Sarge (Sarjus) Kvasnikoff, Sergius Moonin and other community members, constructed the Port Graham-Nanwalek trail. The trail was largely based on a traditional footpath between the villages. According to the report, *Cultural Resources Survey for a New Airport near Port Graham and Nanwalek, Alaska*, “The trail is [significant] for its ability to provide information. Native trails in Alaska... have the potential to answer questions about the organization of trade, inter-group relations, and land-use patterns. Such trails are known to represent human shaping and use of the environment during the early twentieth century on the Kenai Peninsula, but are also traces of earlier use... The Port Graham-Nanwalek CCC Trail, therefore, is eligible for the National Register...” (Yarborough and Meitl 2010).

The historic trail was little more than a footpath until the 1980s, when it became an ATV trail, complete with bridges and graveled lanes. As a result of this road improvement, commuting between the two communities became quite common, even in the winter. Nevertheless, the trail reverted back to a footpath around a decade ago.



While it is still possible to walk the trail, people do not do it on a regular basis. Even during summertime, trail use is occasional at best. Low trail usage is due to a combination of issues that may have included disagreements over maintenance as well as problems with trespassing. The Kenai Borough now plans to build a road between the two communities as part of an airport construction project in 2016, which is intended to serve both communities (Yarborough and Meitl 2010).

Over time, trails disappear and reappear, become cumbersome or easy to use according to the available technology, and even remain alive and well, maintained only in the minds and oral histories of local peoples. Regardless of the nature of access to a location, the place itself still remains significant because it is connected to everything else by people's individual and shared ideas. When discussing trails with school children in 1980, Nanwalek Elders Sarge Kvasnikoff, Sergius Moonin, and Herman Moonin described their experience that emphasized the significance of trails for people in their everyday lives "We walked over land or (rode) on a skiff because there were no motorboats. Very seldom we would see a motorboat around. We mostly rowed in a skiff. When we lived in Portlock there were people that used to come down over land right between the mountain passes there..." (Evans 1980: 54).

Trails were helpful to know, but not necessary in order to access a location such as Portlock. Rene Fossett drew similar conclusions from the Inuit practice of straight-lined mapping between locations. She emphasized that, "the direction of travel was not always relevant. What mattered was reaching the goal, which one could do by moving

from the first named place in the string of instructions to the next, until the end point was reached” (Fossett 2003: 119).

### 1.3 The People

In 2000, according to the U.S. Census, the Kachemak Bay Sugpiat village of Nanwalek had a population of 177. By 2010, again according to census records, the population had risen to 254 individuals, an increase of over 43%. Furthermore, 49.2%, or nearly half of the population, were 19 years or younger.

The Sugpiat of Nanwalek are part of the larger Sugpiat-Alutiit cultural group, which includes, in addition to the two communities on lower Kenai Peninsula, villages on the Kodiak Archipelago, Prince William Sound, and the Alaska Peninsula. Many of the Alaska Native peoples living in the Kachemak Bay of the lower Kenai Peninsula prefer to identify themselves as Sugpiaq instead of the more prevalent designator Alutiiq. While these groups are a part of the larger Alutiiq community, and share a common history, customs, beliefs, and traditions, each group has developed its own set of norms and boundaries based upon the group’s wants and needs.

In the past, Sugpiaq people have had several designations applied to them such as the Chugach Eskimo, Pacific Eskimo, Pacific Gulf Yupik, Suk Eskimo, and Aleut (Brenckle 1975: 421). It is not surprising that these ethnonyms are not those of the original inhabitants, but were applied both by those who have colonized and those in academia who have studied the region. Many of these names held little or no cultural or

personal significance for Sugpiaq people. They are designators largely void of context and, subsequently, of meaning. In relation to naming, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) maintains, “Self-identification as an indigenous individual and acceptance as such by the group is an essential component of indigenous people’s sense of identity. Their continued existence as peoples is closely connected to their possibility to influence their own fate and to live in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems” (IWGIA.org 2012).

The self-designation as Sugpiaq (pl. Sugpiat) meaning a real person (people) has a long-standing history in the region (Csoba DeHass 2012: 10). Accordingly, the language of Sugpiaq people is Sugt’stun, which means speaking like a real person (Clark 1984: 196, Leer 2001: 31). When Russian traders came to the region in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they met the people residing on the central coasts of the Gulf of Alaska. Due to the resemblance Russians perceived between Sugpiaq and Aleut (Unangan) culture and the local people’s physical appearance, they called the population in the Sugpiaq-Alutiiq region “Aleut.” The Russians may have carried this term from Siberia, where the Koryak name *Alyut* was used, or in Unangam Tunuu (Aleut language) where the word *Allíthuh* means “community or host” (Menovshchikov in Viires 1993). Not only did the Russians refer to the Sugpiat as Aleut, but they also used the designator for many Yup’ik people as well. The people in the larger region eventually adopted the name Aleut into their own vocabulary, as evidenced by the usage of a durative based upon their language,

Sugt'stun. In Sugt'stun, singular nouns often end with the suffix 'iq', thus the identifier of "Aleut" became "Alutiiq" (Leer 2001: 31).

When discussing the Native peoples of the Nanwalek region and their relationship with the Koniag (Kodiak Archipelago) and the Chugach (Prince William Sound) peoples, both de Laguna and Birket Smith note that the lower Kenai Peninsula Sugpiat seemed to be related more closely to the Chugach of Prince William Sound than to the Koniag people on Kodiak Island (Birket Smith 1953: 99, de Laguna 1975: 14). Moreover, the Prince William Sound Sugt'stun dialect is also closer to the lower Kenai Peninsula Sugt'stun than to one spoken on Kodiak. While this is a correct observation from a linguistic point of view, local people in Nanwalek often tend to emphasize the differences between their dialect and that spoken in the villages of the Chugach region.

### 1.3.1 Makari's Chugach Story

In 1933, Kaj Birket-Smith of the National Museum of Denmark and Frederica de Laguna of the University of Pennsylvania led the first *Danish-American Alaska Expedition*. During this expedition, they noted down many traditional Sugpiaq stories and histories for the first time. Birket-Smith and de Laguna relied on several Native participants for this material, but their primary source was Chief Makari Feodorovich Chimovitski. Makari's native name was Alingun Nupatlkertlugoq Angakhuna, and he was the oldest Native person de Laguna and Birket-Smith interviewed. Makari stated that he was born in, or about, 1847, and he still remembered the Russian occupation of Alaska as well as

stories about the interaction between the various areas within the Sugpiaq-Alutiiq region.

The following story of Makari's recounts a fight between the Koniag of Kodiak and a Chugach settlement on Hinchinbrook Island, which is approximately 250 miles east of Nanwalek, and northeast of Kodiak:

“One summer the men from Qilangalik left their wives on the refuge rock at Hinchinbrook Island, while they went hunting for fur seals. While the women were alone a war party came from Angiarhtalik on Kodiak Island. The women did not want the enemy to see that there were no men with them, so they made themselves moustaches of bear fur and brandished spears, but one woman leaned over, and her moustache fell off. Then the Kodiak Eskimo realized that there were no men present. They made a ladder out of spears and climbed up onto the rock. Some of the women were killed; others they carried away to be slaves or to be their wives.

In the middle of winter the men from Qilangalik went to Angiarhtalik to avenge their wives. They arrived while the inhabitants were eating supper. They sat down under the window, looking in, and let the snow cover them. The people inside were eating land otter. After that they wanted to play dice with a land-otter humerus. A man threw it. ‘Tell us the truth about what is going to happen.’ Every night the Kodiak Eskimo played this game to find out if the Chugach were coming; before the dice had always fallen at ‘one.’ This time the bone stuck upright on the

elbow end. 'Is that the truth that the Chugach are going to close us in?' The man threw it again, and the bone stuck the same way. 'Is that the truth that they are going to kill us?' An old man said: 'Do not mention the Chugach. They are like ducks, they may come any time.' So the man threw the bone again, and every time it stuck on the end. Then he got disgusted, spat on the bone and hurled it out of the window. 'I don't believe you, you old bone. You cannot tell the truth.' But the old man said: 'Do not talk about the Chugach. They are like the birds, they may come any minute.' They were outside listening to everything that was said. The bone fell between them. A young man inside the house got up and closed the window, saying: 'I am going outside to see if they are there.' The women were all sitting around the fire. The young man went out [and returned] and fell down in front of the fire, but nobody paid any attention, because he always did so to make people believe that the Chugach had arrived. They were all afraid of them. They heard him bubbling. The men outside had speared him, and his blood was running out. The women cried: 'Look, his blood is running out. The Chugach have speared him already.' So they all started to run into the sleeping rooms, and most of them ran into the bathhouse and closed the door. They heard the men outside, saying: 'Do not kill the old man who was sticking up for us.' They killed all the men but did not harm the old man and the women. They found the old man hiding by the bathhouse rocks. The Chugach chief said: 'Do not bother him; he was sticking up for us, take care of him.' Poor fellow, he was all shivering. They recognized their

own wives but [some of them] did not take them back. They took young girls, and some took their wives back. They carried off a lot of young women as slaves. They also took the old man and treated him well. He was always served first when they were eating. They returned to their home before spring and lived just as they did before. When the old man got [very] old, they took care of him and buried him with all kinds of expensive furs. After that they never left their women alone, but they always left a couple of young men to look after them, when they were out after fur seals.” (Johnson 1984:24)

#### 1.4 Brief Historical Overview

Literature about the early historic period of Alaska mostly comes from travel journals of explorers such as James Cook (1993), Nathaniel Portlock (1789), George Vancouver (1798), and Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra (Olson 2002). Also, the employees of the various commercial companies such as the Russian American Company and the Alaska Commercial Company operating in the area and missionary priests from the Russian Orthodox Church left official notes and personal accounts behind. Primary sources from the region started with Aleksei Chirikov, the Russian Captain of the ship *St. Paul*. His journal, along with many others, was translated into English and was published in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as part of the Alaska History Series by the Limestone Press under the editorship of Richard Pierce. Along with the publication of the various journals (Gavriil Davydov 1977, Hieromonk Gideon 1989,

Kiril Khlebnikov 1973, Fedor Litke 1987, St. Jacob Netsvetov 1980, Grigory Shelikov 1981, P.A. Tikhmenev 1979, John Evseyevich Veniaminov 1993), the series also published works by modern scholars (A.I. Alekseev 1990, Lydia Black 1984, Nikolai Bolkhovitinov 1996, Svetlana Fedorova 1975). Other literature based on primary sources includes company and church records (Black 1984, 2004, Pierce 1972, 1986, 1990, 1998).

Richard Shafer argues in *A Guide to Historical Method* that, “there is some value in thinking of evidence being deliberately or unconsciously transmitted. Words produced with some thought of the future may include deliberate bias for that reason” (Shafer 1980:78). Chirikov’s journals, first published in Russia in 1953 by Vasili Divin, serve as an example. The book, *The Great Russian Navigator A.I. Chirikov*, is a mixture of journal entries, romanticisms of exploration, and Divin’s patriotic Soviet-era zeal. The manuscript was translated into English in 1993 by Raymond Fisher, who referenced the original author’s political agenda and the text’s historical importance (Divin: 1993).

An example of the political styling of Soviet authorship on Alaska during this period is in the work of S.B. Okun, who stated: “[The Russian American Company] has helped not only to discover this spacious region but also to fortify in it the Russian influence; it helped also to appropriate the western shore of the Pacific, the natural boundary where even now – the U.S.S.R., the great power of the Pacific, watchfully protects the vital interests of its peoples” (Okun 1951: 259). Shafer argues that Okun is not unusual in his authorship as, “historians are products of their own times – that is, of the institutions of their specific cultures, even if their culture encourages them to study



others. Even in a culture that encourages individualism – men are not entirely free, either psychically or spiritually” (Shafer 1980: 23).

#### 1.4.1 Early Contact Period

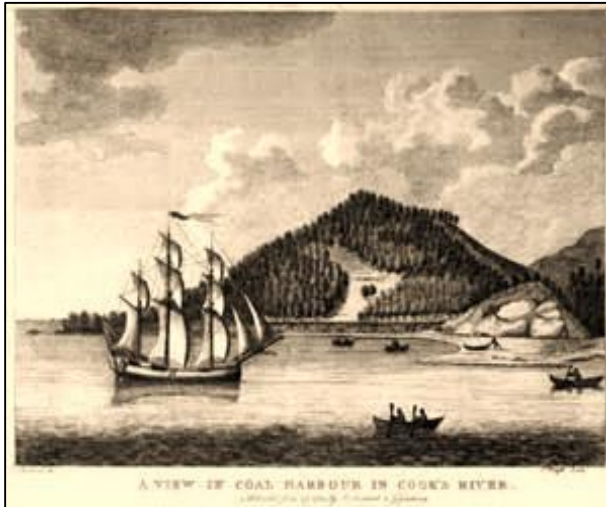


Figure 1.5 Coal Harbour in Cook's River

Captain Cook visited the region on his third voyage in 1778 (Cook 1993), and named an island near Nanwalek in honor of his wife, Elizabeth. The Russians established the first Russian colony on the American mainland, Fort Aleksandrovsk, at Nanwalek in 1786 (Black 2004: 108). That same year, the English explorers Captains Portlock and Dixon made landfall near Nanwalek. While in the region, they encountered both Russians and local Native peoples with whom they traded (C.L. 1984: 29).

Captain Portlock is also credited with the discovery of coal deposits at the mouth of the Cook Inlet across the bay from Nanwalek. However, it was the Russians who exploited this resource about a half a century later. By 1850, the settlement of Coal Mine

had approximately 80 inhabitants. This number quickly grew, and between 1857 and 1863 over 400 workers were brought from Russia. For a ten-year period, Coal Mine became the third largest settlement of Russian America (Pierce 1975) with a mixed population of Russians, Sugpiat, and various other nationalities and Native groups represented until the mining operation shut down in 1865.

Hieromonk Juvenal (Iuvenalii) led the first missionizing efforts by the Russian Orthodox Church in the Kachemak Sugpiat region. One of the first Russian missionary priests to Alaska, Father German, wrote the following account: “In 1795 Hieromonk Iuvenalii left Kad’iak for Nuchek, where he baptized more than seven hundred Chugach, and then crossed to Kenai Bay and baptized all the local inhabitants” (Pierce 1990: 203).

Similarly, Fr. Veniaminov, later St. Innocent, wrote that Fr. Iuvenalii had baptized more than 700 Chugach before traveling to Kenai Bay to perform further baptisms (Veniaminov 1984: 235). However, the majority of information on the life and death of Fr. Iuvenalii and much of the available evidence seems to be fabricated, first by H.P. Rezanov, who was hostile towards the Church, and secondly by, Ivan Petrov who claimed to possess Fr. Iuvenalii’s personal diary.

Lydia Black and Richard Pierce have written about the exploits of Ivan Petrov, noting that he was a bit of scoundrel. Pierce contends that, “for readers of H.H. Bancroft’s *History of Alaska* (1886), the certainty was compounded by Bancroft’s acceptance of the alleged journals of Father Iuvenalii, a fabrication by his assistant Ivan Petrov, cited uncritically by a number of historians, anthropologists and popular

writers” (Pierce 1990: 203). Lydia Black goes into further detail in her article, “The Daily Journal of Reverend Father Juvenal: A Cautionary Tale,” as she expounds that “... historians are quick to point out that archival materials associated with the name Ivan Petrov cannot be taken at face value” and calls Petrov the “Baron Munchausen of the copy room” (Black 1981: 34).

As a special agent compiling the 1880 census of Alaska, Petrov was also directed to report on the industries available at the Alaskan district. One of the resources he mentioned was coal, which had a long-standing history on the Lower Kenai Peninsula. Coal Mine, the settlement at the mouth of Port Graham Bay, was the location of the first Russian Orthodox Church built in the region. After the mine closed, the Sts. Sergius and Herman of Valaam church was transferred to Nanwalek. It is still the only church in the village, and every Sugpiaq man, woman, and child born in Nanwalek is a member of this Russian Orthodox parish (Csoba DeHass 2007:210).

Aron Crowell, who has written much about this region and the relationship to Russian colonization and Russian America, argues that the fur trade that occurred in Alaska was very different from the fur trade in other regions in the Americas. Crowell concludes that the various trading companies “supplied inexpensive manufactured commodities to Native American trappers in exchange for furs, but exercised little direct political control over their trading partners” whereas the Russian companies “forcibly subjugated the Native peoples of Siberia and southern Alaska, then collected furs from them in the form of tributary taxes, or forced them to hunt” (Crowell 1997: 7).

Crowell makes the case that fur trade in Alaska was not based on the exchange of commodities and, thus, is different from the fur trade in other parts of America and Canada. Sonja Luehrmann and Andrei Grinev make similar arguments, based on Marxist theory. Grinev claims, through his colonial politarism theory, that “the colonial administration [...] exercises power through key collective economic activities and controlling their products” (Grinev in Luehrmann 2008: 80). Crowell further notes that his study is, “inspired by Wolf’s analysis of the circumpolar fur trade [and] as Wolf points out, this trade involved two very different methods for extracting economic surpluses from indigenous groups” (Crowell 1997: 7).

As I demonstrated above, the interpretation of historical documents and sources on the nature of interactions between Russians and Alaska Natives vary greatly among scholars of Russian America, but the significance they attach to these early contact experiences does not. It is undeniable that many Alaska Native people have incorporated Russian traditions into their current understanding of their own ethnic identity, in part, through their Russian ancestry. Nanwalek is no different in this regard.

#### 1.4.2 Nanwalek’s Russian Ancestors

Grigorii Kvasnikoff was born 1802 in the Kaluga Region of Russia. Kvasnikoff belonged to the Russian burgher class and was in his early twenties when he set sail for Kodiak, Alaska (Arndt 1993: 40). While in Kodiak, Kvasnikoff met Mavra, the thirteen-year-old daughter of a Russian shipbuilder. Mavra and Kvasnikoff were married in 1829

(Kvasnikoff et al. 1980: 20). After his service to the Russian American Company, Kvasnikoff retired to Ninilchik in 1847. The settlement was established by royal decree as, “a place where colonial citizens, could settle, if they so wished, rather than return to Russian” (Kvasnikoff et al. 1980: 20). The village of Ninilchik was also known as Munina, after Efim Munin, who was one of the first Russians, along with the Kvasnikoffs, to settle there. Efim Munin came from Siberia to Fort Ross, the Russian colony in California, in the early 1820s (Osborn 1997: 382). With his second wife, Agripina, Efim Munin moved to Ninilchick by way of Sitka. While the Munins (Moonins) came to Nanwalek in the 1860s, Marva and Grigorii Kvasnikoff’s grandchild, Sarjus, moved from Ninilchik to Nanwalek in the early 1930s. Other families who have a rich Russian history in the region include, in part, such names as Tanape, Anahonak, Macha, Malchoff, Kamlook, Ukatish, and Romanoff.

#### 1.4.3 The Sale of Alaska

As previously described, explorers of various national origins had been coming to Alaska since the 1760s to hunt for furs, whales, and to fish. When the Russians offered Alaska to the United States for sale, the Secretary of State, William H. Seward, who was already familiar with Alaska’s resources, immediately asked for congressional approval of the acquisition. The proposition initially met with resistance until a congressman, Charles Sumner, after reading a Smithsonian report on Alaska, “made a three-and-a-half hour speech on the floor of the Senate calling for ratification. He extolled the area’s

great wealth and its vast resources, emphasizing its fisheries [...]. By a vote of 37 to 2 the Senate accepted the treaty” (Naske and Slotnik 1987: 65) which allowed for the Department of Alaska to be created. The United States formally bought Alaska in March 1867 from Tsar Alexander II for 7.2 million dollars.

By the end of the Russian colonial period in Alaska, the relationship between much of the Native population and the Russians had adapted from that of oppressor and oppressed to a relationship of mutual dependency. In Nanwalek, for example, the Russians relied on the local people for food, while the local people relied on the Russian Orthodox church for baptisms and marriage, etc. (Csoba DeHass 2009: 23). This relationship showed itself in Article 3 of the Alaska Treaty of 1867, which stated, in part, that the Native peoples of Alaska, with the exception of ‘uncivilized’ tribes, “shall be admitted to the enjoyment of all rights [and advantages] as citizens of the United States, and shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property, and religion” (Alaska Treaty of Cession 15 Stat. 539. Article III). “Uncivilized” tribes were largely those that the Russians knew existed but did not do business with. The Russian government had these conditions included in the treaty so that they could safeguard those Native groups and Creoles<sup>1</sup> they had interacted with and could shield Russian Orthodox Christians from Western Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup>As the Native people were so crucial to both Company and Church interests certain privileges and rights were granted. The Russian government ranked the Native people in two categories: uncivilized, civilized. A sub-division of civilized was that of citizen or Creole, it then granted rights based on these classifications. Those that had direct involvement or work within the company and/or church were considered civilized. The citizen were those that either worked in the company at a managerial level, a church deacon or priest, or those that were born or directly descendant from a

After the sale of Alaska, the United States government completely ignored these provisions, undertaking a concerted effort to diminish the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. In Kodiak this was done by forcing Russian Orthodox parents to sign the custody of their children over to the Baptist orphanage (Pullar 1992: 186). Such practices were, partially, made possible by immense power and influence the Presbyterian missionary Rev. Dr. Sheldon Jackson held over the territory as General Agent for Education in Alaska. While funds for education were generally low in the territory, the Organic Act of 1884 appropriated \$25,000 for ‘formal’ education. In 2014 dollars, this sum equals around \$500,000, a budget less than sufficient to cover the necessary costs.

Similarly to many other Alaska Native communities, the village of Nanwalek (English Bay) did not have a U.S. sponsored school. Education of children was provided both at home and in church schools. According to the first U.S. census conducted in Alaska in 1880, there were 88 people living in Nanwalek (Compendium of the Tenth Census 1880: 1427). From the records of the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC), it is also clear that the village had a store that traded fur with the locals for basic supplies

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Russian parent, regardless if they currently worked in the company/church or not. The rank of citizen or Creole was further divided into further stations i.e. commoner and other. Regardless of the position at birth there was the possibility to rise through the ranks. As an example, Creole seaman Alexander Kashevarov who was born, in 1809, a son of a Creole father and Native mother who grew up in the Russian Alaskan coexistence we’ve discussed. In Kashevarov’s service for the Russian navy he voyaged to England, Brazil, Australia, and the Marshall Islands and personally mapped the Northwest Coast of Alaska from Kotzebue Sound to beyond Point Barrow. Kashevarov retired as a Port Commander, Brigadier General, and a member of nobility. Also, by the position he earned he was able to question the ‘morality’ of members within Russian America and was, in part, able to postpone the Company’s new charter until an inspection of the colony had been done.

and selected luxury items such as tea, guns, clothing, sewing materials, and kitchen furnishings, among others (Alaska Commercial Company Records 1868-1913, English Bay 1872-1897, Boxes 8, 9, 10). Most Alaska Native communities did not experience significant change in their everyday life-ways during the first twenty years of U.S. possession. Essential services beyond occasional mail rarely reached these remote communities, with the exception of periodic visits from schoolteachers and permanently established stores. For most Native families, the daily routine of hunting for the Alaska Commercial Company was very similar to that of hunting for the Russian American Company, yet the overarching consequences became greatly different in the early 1900 with the decline of fur bearing animals.

#### 1.4.4 Fur Trading and the Alaska Commercial Company

In the 1870s, the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC) began to operate a trading station at English Bay (today's Nanwalek), and their 1875 inventory of buildings showed a store, a storehouse, a barn, and a house. A few years later, the ACC built another storehouse. The English Bay station also maintained a fleet of transport and cargo ships with masts, i.e., schooners as well as *baidarkas* (kayaks) for use and sale. The Alaska Commercial Company changed its name to the Northern Commercial Company in 1922. Seventy years later, the company resumed doing business as the Alaska Commercial Company and currently operates 33 stores throughout Alaska (Alaska Commercial Company Website 2012).



Up until the 1880 census, collected by the colorful Ivan Petrov, the federal government mostly ignored Alaska. During this early American period, “no prospector could stake a mining claim with security for his enterprise; no property could be deeded or transferred; no will was valid; marriage could not be celebrated; no injured party could secure redress for grievances except through his own acts; crime could not be punished” (Gruening 1954: 36).

Due to the declining availability of fur, in 1907, the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC) opened a warehouse near English Bay (Aleksandrovsk), in the seasonal settlement of Paluwik. This station at Paluwik, meaning the “Place of Sadness,” was largely seen as a distribution center for the ACC’s operations on the Kenai Peninsula. The ACC was also harvesting timber at Paluwik - for building dories for use by steamers (ACC Box 117, Folder 1065). This warehouse was later sold to another company, and it became the area’s first cannery. In 1909, a U.S. Geological Survey cartographer confused the names of Port Graham and English Bay where Paluwik was located. Subsequently, the seasonal camp, Paluwik, became Port Graham, and Aleksandrovsk became English Bay. During this time, a number of locals also moved from Aleksandrovsk (now English Bay) to Paluwik (now Port Graham) to be closer to employment.

#### 1.4.5 Walter Meganack's Port Graham Settlement Story

The following recollection by Walter Meganack, then of Paluwik, highlights some of the reasons behind the establishment of the village:

“I heard my father say that Paul Ofkew was the first one to settle in Port Graham. He had a barabara at the site where the cannery is now. In 1912, my dad, Affanasia, my older half-brother, Anton Meganack, and my father-in-law Nick Mumchuck moved here to Port Graham. They were the first people to move here to build cabins and settle. Tim Ukatish, Dick Anahonak, Ephim Moonin, Demetri Moonin and Alex Anahonak moved across the bay where Willie Moonin lives to build cabins. Later on, between 1914 and 1920, they decided to join the rest of us on this side of the bay.

One reason people moved to Port Graham was because hunting was getting harder in English Bay. Animals were getting scarce because they were hunted so much. Another reason was the cannery opened in Port Graham that opened up employment for the people. Non-native way of life started with the cannery being established” (Meganack 1981: 24).

By 1920, the village of Port Graham had a population of 47 people, and English Bay had a population of 107 (Stanek 2000: 9). A severe flu epidemic hit the region, and,

within a decade, more than half of the population had died. The 1940 census taken at English Bay counted only 48 inhabitants.

#### 1.4.6 Herman Moonin's Epidemic Story

In the text, *Chugach Legends*, Herman Moonin of Nanwalek shares an account that he remembers from this era:

“There was a woman in Nanwalek who practiced witchcraft. The woman had a baby that had a big mouth. It was from ear to ear. The baby had real sharp teeth in her mouth. The woman died when the baby was born. The baby was buried alive with the woman right in front of the old church where the road is now.

The people were afraid of the baby because they thought she was going to be a witch too. She had big teeth. They showed all the way across her face. She was like an alligator. The baby had a mouth just like that. Nobody wanted her. The people were afraid of the baby. They thought she would be like her mom. They thought the baby would come back like the witch to do something to the people. They were afraid of her.

Nobody wanted to feed the baby because she had those real sharp teeth and a great big mouth. They didn't know what to feed her with, so they decided

to bury her alive. They buried her right by her mom. The people said they buried her right in front of the old church. There is a road in that area now.

Whenever a person is going to die, someone would hear the baby cry. I heard that sound in 1936 or 1937. I heard it once when we were having breakfast early in the morning. My mom told me it was the witch again. She told us someone was going to die. It was 1936 or 1937 when I heard that crying. People were dying all around Nanwalek. There was a dead person everyday maybe two or three” (Johnson 1984: 55).

#### 1.4.7 Self-governance and BIA Influence

It was also during this same period, 1936, that the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) became recognized within the Territory of Alaska. This act aided communities in their goal for self-governance. The IRA made it possible for Native communities to draw up constitutions that allowed for a limited self-government and made it possible for outside governmental bureaucracies to interact with the local ruling body on an official level. However, this also may have hindered the traditional and often informal localized decision-making process.

In 1959, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) opened a school in Nanwalek, and in the nearly a century since Sheldon Jackson’s original view of education in Alaska, things had changed very little. The BIA representatives believed their mission was to Americanize and assimilate the Native students (Dauenhauer 1997). Sperry Ash, a

resident of Nanwalek, explains, “When my Grandma was little, a boy in her class accidentally spoke Sugt’s tun and the teacher called him in front of the class and cleared the top of the desk. She told the boy to lie down and she got the soap from the desk and started to wash his face and mouth and you could see the little boy’s tears. He was an example” (interview, August 5, 2004).



Figure 1.6 R101 #26 English Bay School

#### 1.4.8 The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

Throughout the 1960s, Alaska Native peoples organized into various political entities, and these groups united in 1966 into the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN). The AFN had a clear purpose in securing the rights and protections that its members were entitled to under the laws of the United States. At this time, two of AFN’s most prominent groups, the Inupiat Paitot and the Dena Nena Henash petitioned the Department of Interior (DOI) to withdraw various tracts of state lands, “pending the establishment of the reservations or other settlement of Alaska Native claims” (Mitchell

2001: 88). That same year, DOI Secretary Udall took control of all Alaska land issues and withheld state land claims until Congress could mediate an agreement. Secretary Udall explained, “in the face of Federal guarantee that the Alaska Natives shall not be disturbed in the use and occupation of lands, I could not in good conscience allow title to pass into others' hands, [moreover] to permit others to acquire title to the lands the Natives are using and occupying would create an adversary against whom the Natives would not have the means of protecting themselves” (Clarkin 2001: 251).

Many officials in Alaska considered Udall’s land freeze unlawful. The state hired the lawyer Edgar Boyko, “to get a fair and speedy determination of Native land claims” (Mitchell 2001: 142). Unfortunately, the settlement terms originally offered by the state fell far short of being fair or equitable. In 1968, the federal land claims task force put forth a compromise, structured largely on Boyko’s plan in that Alaska Natives would be returned a certain amount of land in addition to monetary compensation. Further, this compromise suggested that the land controlled by Native peoples would be separated into two categories: a regional corporation, which would act as “subsurface estates” and a village corporation, which would act as “surface estates” (Case 2002: 162). In 1968, Alaska Natives held restricted title to only 15,000 acres, and, of those, less than five hundred acres were recognized by the state as being under legal title (Naske and Slotnik 1987: 198).

With the discovery of the Prudhoe Bay Oil Field came a new motivation to settle the land claims issue. Alaska Native groups, along with various other organizations,

managed to pass an injunction that stopped anticipated construction on the proposed pipeline. By 1971, the oil companies realized that the pipeline would not be possible without a land claims settlement. Within the year, Alaska Natives were returned over 45 million acres of land and awarded 962.5 million dollars in compensation. As a result, the issue of aboriginal title to land claims had been mostly settled. However, other issues of hunting, gathering, and fishing, among others, are still ongoing and unresolved today.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) brought about many changes for those living within the region. These changes included creating a new social division within communities and families, namely, that of the shareholder. Everyone born on or before December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1971 could enroll as a shareholder under ANCSA. Those born after that date, i.e. the “after-borns,” were not granted stock and could only receive stock through inheritance. This watering down of the stocks, as the numbers of heirs grew exponentially, has often been referred to by shareholders as a subtle termination policy.

The Act divided the lands and monies amongst 12 regional corporations and one corporation that represented those Alaska Native peoples who no longer lived in Alaska. Further, ANCSA created over 200 local village corporations (Skinner 1997: 87). The surface rights to these lands were granted to the village corporations while the regional corporation held the subsurface rights. At the time, the English Bay Village Corporation had 71 shareholders and was entitled to 76,400 acres; however, nearly half of the acres

had to be chosen from state lands roughly eighty miles away because the Kenai Fjords National Park now encompassed much of their traditional lands.

Changes were made to ANCSA in 1980 through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). ANILCA amended ANCSA in regards to subsistence rights on Federal lands for all rural Alaskans, both Native and non-Native. This Act was significant for many Alaskan tribal villages in that it took into account that many subsistence activities that take place for members of the village may take place outside of their ANCSA land holdings; however, it failed to recognize those subsistence activities that may take place at sea. Furthermore, it restricted subsistence activities within those areas designated as National Parks or Refuges; i.e., much of the traditional lands of the Sugpiat of Port Graham and Nanwalek. In short, the people of these villages were suddenly faced with a shift in their life-ways: the inability to subsist in their traditional ways, whether on land or water. For many, the only option was to sell much of their traditional lands to those who limited their ability to survive in the first place: the U.S. government via the Park Service and similar agencies. Nine years after ANCSA was enacted the people of Nanwalek, while still coming to terms with their new reality, had their world turned upside down.

#### 1.4.9 The Exxon Valdez

On March 24, 1989, the Exxon Valdez, a midsize tanker, ran aground on Bligh Reef. What happened next has been referred to as “One of the most significant



environmental events in modern times” (Haycox 2002: 139). The implications of the spill were defined by its magnitude as it reached almost 11 million gallons. It was one of the largest oil spills to date in the United States. The location of the initial spill was approximately 200 miles from Nanwalek, and the oil took two weeks before reaching Nanwalek’s shores.

The Exxon Valdez oil spill forever changed Nanwalek and its people. Much of their traditional subsistence resources and areas had been either damaged or destroyed. Many in the village relied on commercial fishing for their livelihood, and almost all relied on the local salmon runs and other fish to help feed their families throughout the winter. The impact of the oil spill is still felt today, for, in 2013, nobody in Nanwalek commercial fished even though many still had permits and boats. Further, several species are still considered to be recovering including sea otters (*Enhydra lutris*), killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), and herring (*Clupea pallasii*) among others (Bernton 2009). This manmade disaster caused many people of Nanwalek to go into debt for the first time, and their dependence on outside organizations grew exponentially. The independence they once felt from those outside their own culture was fading quickly.

#### 1.4.10 Nanwalek Today

After the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, Nanwalek was renamed “English Bay.” The village’s name was officially changed back to the original Sugt’stun designation, Nanwalek, in 1991 by public vote (McCoy 1992). Nanwalek means “The

place by the lagoon” (English Bay Students 1981: 3). Today, Nanwalek has about 40 houses, 250 inhabitants, a store, a community hall, a school, the Saint Sergius and Saint Herman of Valaam Russian Orthodox Church, and approximately 50 all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) or Hondas.



Figure 1.7 Nanwalek Lagoon

The village is governed by the seven-member IRA Council<sup>2</sup> with a 1<sup>st</sup> Chief, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chief, a treasurer, secretary, and three general members. Most of the eligible community members are shareholders in the English Bay Village Corporation and have land allotments in the area surrounding the village. While the community is technically a part of the Chugach Alaska Regional Corporation, and mostly serviced by Chugachmiut

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<sup>2</sup> The United States Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934. The IRA allowed tribal communities to author their own constitution for limited self-rule. These communities are governed by an elected village council and a chief or a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> chief depending on custom.

as the regional non-profit corporation, some community members are enrolled in the Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI) as shareholders.

Today, Nanwalek is still a growing community with about six newborns in the village each year. Approximately 130 children are enrolled in the local Headstart program and the Nanwalek Elementary and High School, which offers K-12 education and daily Sugt'stun classes for all students. As of June 2014, Nanwalek is a single-denominational Russian Orthodox community with an older church building that is on the National Register of Historic Places, and a current church building that the village has outgrown about five years ago. They are in the process of erecting a new church that will accommodate everyone.

The majority of people in Nanwalek are locally employed. Many in the village live on a combination of subsistence and seasonal work. The largest employers are the IRA council, the clinic, the North Pacific Rim Housing Authority, and the school. While people gain a substantial amount of their food from subsistence, including harvesting salmon, commercial fishing has greatly diminished to almost non-existence ever since the Exxon-Valdez incident. However, community leaders have been actively working towards developing further housing and employment opportunities for locals on lands owned by the village corporation.

## 1.5 Introduction to Remaining Chapters

My focus in chapter two is methodology. I will look at how I decided on my particular research area, previous experiences in the region, and current topics. Also discussed is the reliance on data collection and community involvement. Lastly, I continue my conversations regarding the insider/outsider relationships and introduce the notions of delocalization and relocalization.

Chapter three is an overview of my research with the central theme being on how people define their surroundings based on a shared knowledge system. In this chapter I also discuss how members of a culture are consistently adapting their traditions to the current needs and wants of their communities. I continue the chapter by looking at the use and maintenance of ATVs. This is followed by a historical account of how ATVs came to be, their popularity in Nanwalek, and how they are often status symbols. I conclude with analyzing a discussion with a Nanwalek mechanic about his role in the community.

My focus in chapter four is about related health risks. ATV usage comes with various degrees of health issues while they also allow for increased participation in subsistence activities and surprisingly enough, exercise. In this section, I also look at how ATVs are often the cause of personal injuries and the impact of poverty to overall health of community members.

In chapter five, I examine more closely the notions of relocalization and delocalization as well as activist anthropology through comparing the similarities and

differences between the Sami and the Sugpiat. As the notion of delocalization emerged from fieldwork among the Sami, I examine Sami history and life-ways vis-à-vis Sugpiaq history and life-ways on the lower Kenai Peninsula. I particularly focus on changing technologies and their adaptation through local cultural logic.

Chapter six is the dissertation's conclusions. It summarizes the key points of the thesis and breaks them down in to three main themes: relocalization and decision-making, relocalizing the notion of sustainability, and finally, relocalization of the places that count. It includes a discussion of how an introduced technology has made relocalization a possibility. It is important to remember that traditions and customs are neither genetic nor eternal; rather, they are learned, modified, created and, at times, discarded.

## Chapter 2: Research Methods and Issues

### 2.1 Introduction

There is a stark difference between inclusion in a group and membership. Those who have been raised outside a particular cultural group do not necessarily have shared understandings, hence the term, ‘outsider.’ This notion can be examined through the lens of boundaries as described by Fredrik Barth, “A dichotomization of others as strangers, as members of another ethnic group, implies a recognition of limitations on shared understandings, difference in criteria for judgment of value and performance, and a restriction of interaction to sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest” (Barth 1998: 15). Outsiders can have knowledge about a culture and its various ways and norms, and yet it is a knowledge that is largely void of a culturally embedded subconscious understanding. It also fundamentally lacks personal consequence and shared significance. For all intents and purposes, outsiders are no less aware of the collective world around them than insiders; however, the degree of understanding of the immediate reality does differ between the two groups.

Regarding my research in Nanwalek, as an outsider, I understood that I was affecting other people’s behaviors and actions much in the same way I was simultaneously being influenced. I came to the village with a set of preconceptions and biases. These are largely unavoidable and natural when one comes in from the outside to do research or work within a group. As an aside, there are some who claim that they

can leave their personal baggage at the door and do ‘pure research.’ Based on my experiences in collaborative research, these people are misleading themselves, as they are also equally deceiving the communities they are working with. Being human means having biases and denying them does not make one’s research impartial, only inferior. Exploring, acknowledging, and actively working around one’s own biases are what makes collaborative research possible and useful for both community-based and scholarly applications.

The best piece of advice I received regarding participant research came from a friend in Nanwalek. When I was working on my master’s degree and needed to do my initial interviews in the village, I was quite nervous. I was nervous about the prospect of introducing myself for the first time to complete strangers and asking them to share their opinions and record their stories. I asked Sperry Ash, “What do I need to do so I don’t mess up?” he laughed and told me, “You’ll screw up – but try to act like us.”

## 2.2 My Coming to Nanwalek Story

My research has its origin in the autumn of 2002, when I first met Sperry Ash. He came up to me at the college bookstore and said that he remembered seeing my wife, Medeia, and me at the local Russian Orthodox Church. We visited a bit and then he asked us over for dinner. Being new to Fairbanks, I gladly accepted his invitation. During our visit with Sperry and his future wife, Michele, he informed us that he was from the village of Nanwalek and proceeded to tell us what a truly wonderful place it was. The

following summer Medeia and I took a road trip around Alaska that included a visit to Sperry in Nanwalek. After reaching Homer, one has two choices to get to the village: one can either fly or take a boat. We flew.

I asked Sperry how to make reservations, and he told me not to worry about it and to just go to Homer Air and hop on the next flight going to Nanwalek. I have always been one who likes to make arrangements ahead of time; however, I had to learn, time and again, that planning ahead is not always the most efficient way of handling things in the village. When we pulled up to the hanger that advertised Glacier and Bear Viewing Tours on the back side of the airport, we were met by a gentleman who asked us to load our luggage on the wooden pallet in front of the gate. I explained that we were planning on coming back later that day and did not have any. In hindsight, it would have been better if we had taken an extra pair of pants and socks. As I entered into the little waiting room, I was met with a pleasant greeting from a man behind the desk. He asked us where we would like to go, and I answered, Nanwalek. He became rather stoned-faced upon hearing my request and asked me, “why?” What I didn’t know was that the village of Nanwalek was at the time, and even today to a certain degree, a by-invitation only village. These villages are actually not all that uncommon in Alaska; however, being new to the state, it caught me by surprise. I explained that I knew Sperry and he had invited us to visit. Perhaps not satisfied with my answer, he proceeded in calling the Ash family. At the time I was impressed that he knew the phone number by heart. Once he got the go ahead for our visit, his pleasant demeanor returned and he explained that



the village has had a long-standing request of Homer Air to not fly strangers into the community.

Flying had never bothered me before and at one time I actually used to enjoy it. My first clue to what was coming should have been when the airline worker behind the counter asked my wife and me how much we weighed. I have since found out it is completely acceptable to lie about your weight when asked by a small plane operator; in fact it is often encouraged by other passengers. For example, my wife and I often each add 20 lbs., unless it is windy, then we add more. We figured if a few pounds could be the difference between a nice flight and a swim in the ocean, we should err on the side of caution.

After a few minutes, the door between the hanger and waiting room opened and a man, who had a remarkable resemblance to an older Art Garfunkel, asked if we were ready to go. We walked out to the smallest plane I had ever seen, a Cessna 172. I realize now that there are actually a lot of smaller planes than that, but again, I was fairly new to rural Alaska at the time. The Cessna 172 Skyhawk is a single engine, high-wing airplane with four seats and has a gross weight rating of a little over 2200 lbs., which sounds like a lot, until you figure the plane itself weighs over 1400 lbs. This means the plane can handle less than 800 lbs. of fuel, cargo, and passengers, combined. If I had known this at the time, I have no doubt I would have asked someone for a calculator before agreeing to get on. As we approached the aircraft, the pilot, Art, looked at me and said, "You look heavy. You should sit up front," which was perhaps not the kindest remark,

but I was grateful he put safety first.

Twenty minutes after taking off from Homer, Art looked over at me and pointed towards some houses on a coastal rocky outcrop. He asked if we've ever been to Nanwalek before. I said, "No," to which he replied, "Then hold on." There are certain things you never want to hear a pilot say, such as, "I'm having a really bad day," "oops," "well, we made it," and of course, "hold on." In the past ten years, I have had the privilege of hearing all these remarks, and many similar ones, while flying in and out of Nanwalek. As soon as the pilot warned me, he nosed the plane down towards a jagged cliff face. Seconds before impact, he punched the engine and turned sharply 180 degrees while stalling the engine. In retrospect, I remember seeing rocks, limbs, and water. I heard the plane's piercing stall-alarm and the gravel as it bounced off the bottom of the plane, and then there was nothing. I sat in my seat for few seconds before opening my eyes. Eventually I became conscious that I was on a beach with a small blue shed that held a sign, "Nanwalek Airport."



Figure 2.1 Airplane on Nanwalek Beach

The borough describes Nanwalek's airstrip as follows, "The approach and takeoff to and from this airstrip is extremely dangerous, especially during bad weather and cross winds. Mountains rise 600 feet above the airstrip on either end. During storms, wind and high tides cause the ocean to wash completely over parts of the airstrip which causes the southern end to erode away" (Kenai Peninsula Borough 92: 19).

Once we had landed I remember thinking to myself, "I never want to do that again," not knowing that my flight by comparison had been uneventful. Sperry met us, and I asked him if my recent near-death experience was normal, to which he replied indeed it was, and there had been several accidents in the past. I quickly wondered, "How many accidents," then remembering I had to fly out again in a few hours, I tried very diligently to think about something else. Sperry and Michele took us first to the community hall, which was hosting a potluck for some politician who came in. Sperry introduced us first to Emilie Swenning, the 1<sup>st</sup> Chief at the time, and various other community members. From there, we went to the Sts. Sergius and Herman of Valaam Church followed by his parents' home.

After meeting his family, we were fed a wonderful meal and then proceeded to get on some Honda ATVs and took a tour of the village. Sperry and Michele showed us the local sites, and then drove us up the muddy trails to Second Lake. Halfway up to our destination, Sperry abruptly stopped near a group of men felling trees and introduced us to the small crowd, including his uncle, Wally Kvasnikoff.



Figure 2.2 Hondas at 2<sup>nd</sup> Lake

When we got to the lake, we jumped into a leaky skiff and motored over to a cabin on his family's allotment. The journey across the lake was beautiful. Shortly after beginning, our boat lurched to the side and the motor sputtered. Sperry calmly explained, "Hit a salmon." After arriving at the cabin, we pulled the skiff ashore, lit the stove, warmed our feet, and brewed some tea. For the next couple of hours, I just relaxed and listened to Sperry tell one story after another. It had only been a short time since first arriving at Homer Air, yet in that moment, at a cabin on Second Lake, though I did not know it yet, my reality had started to shift.

Our friendship with Sperry, Michele, and the Ash family has continued since our first meeting. Sperry earned his Master of Arts in Education, with a language endorsement, and went back to Nanwalek to teach Sugt'stun bilingual classes. Unfortunately, the Kenai Borough would only give him a staff, instead of a faculty, position. In this position, his compensation package was not on par with others in the

school and his talents were being underutilized. Further, conflict arose between him and school principal at the time and subsequently, Sperry left for a much better position at a school in Akiachak, Michele's village near Bethel, in the Central Yup'ik region of Alaska.

During this same period, I was working towards my Master of Arts (M.A.) in Cross-Cultural Studies. While in the program, I took several education courses, including ED 631, Small School Curriculum Design. The class examined different examples and aspects of rural curricula used in Alaska. In our final unit task, we were asked to determine both that was relevant and irrelevant to students being taught in village schools. From there, my master's project took shape. I asked my advisor at the time, Ray Barnhardt, if this question could be the foundation in the development of the project, and he agreed.

The initial idea for my MA project was to author a curriculum around the localized stories of the Chugach region as offered in the text, *Chugach Legends*. With this idea, and approval from the University, Medeia and I returned to Nanwalek. My wife, who studies Russian Orthodoxy, among other things, in the region also wanted to do her fieldwork in Nanwalek at the time. We arranged to meet with the IRA Council over the term break to get their approval.

Our original plan, staying a week, was extended by three days due to weather delays. When we first arrived, we went up to the community hall and met with the 1<sup>st</sup> Chief in an effort to set an appointment to meet with the Tribal Council. She said she

would let us know. Two days passed and we had still not heard anything back. Medeia and I just walked around the village not really knowing what to do. Sperry and his family were on vacation in California at the time, and we were largely left to make friends on our own. The only guidance we got was an email, in which Sperry stated that we should use his Honda while there and to visit with his uncle Wally, as we would, “probably get along.” I didn’t know anything about ATVs at the time and though Sperry told us to use it, I declined; hence, we walked everywhere. I found out later on, people thought this both strange and funny. Regarding visiting his uncle Wally, we never even made the attempt.

On the third day, a knock came at the door and we were told that there was a Thanksgiving potluck down at the community hall and we should go. While there, we were introduced to various people and gave each a brief overview about what we wanted to do. Later that evening, and again every day afterwards, we were invited to different homes, each having a celebration of some sort. At each, we were asked what we were doing and why we were there.

On the sixth day, we were again summoned to the community hall. My wife had prepared a very nice presentation regarding her and my research; however, she never had the chance to show it. When we arrived, we were invited into an ongoing Council meeting and I quickly recognized many faces of those that had previously invited us to their homes. We were told that it was agreed upon that we could come, but as there was no available housing or apartments, we would have to fix up an abandoned house

across the road. They explained that we should make it livable, so that when we left, another family could move in. We readily agreed and were happy for the opportunity – thinking it might be fun to fix up an old house. The history of the house was also explained to us. At one time, it was someone’s home, then moved and converted into a clinic, and then made into the post office. Finally, it was moved to its current location at the time, on a cliff overlooking the ocean, and used primarily for storage.



Figure 2.3 The Cliff House

After the meeting, we walked over to the building and our hearts dropped. Our enthusiasm in thinking that this might be a fun project quickly diminished. There was vinyl siding attached at random places on the side of the house, the rest was a mix of particleboard and painted wood siding. The metal door was rusted and padlocked shut. A councilmember gave us the key and with a sense of foreboding, we opened the door. Upon entering, we were met by a strong diesel smell, as a portion of a wall and floor

was fuel-soaked. There was neither plumbing nor heat, as the monitor stove was broken and the woodstove long gone. The interior walls were mostly studs, and it was obvious the roof leaked badly. But, it could not be helped – we had already made a deal. The Council agreed to help us, and in return, we had agreed to help them.

After moving to Nanwalek in June 2005, the only research I did for the first two months involved do-it-yourself home renovation books. It was not until September that I started asking people what they thought of my curriculum idea, and to my surprise, they did not like it. They explained that while Chugach Legends is a good book, most of the stories did not come from their immediate region, and if I really wanted to design something community-based, I should include more localized stories and history. Further, while talking to people, it became clear that the framework was also wrong. It was centered on classroom instruction and would most likely be taught by an outsider. Over the next year and half, I revised my thinking and finished my project with local input. I gave a copy of the curriculum to Chugachmiut, the nonprofit corporation of Chugach Alaska, and we left our home in Nanwalek in September of 2006. After getting my MA, I eventually entered into an interdisciplinary PhD program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Over the next couple of years, we returned to Nanwalek several times, mostly during holidays. Sometimes it was just for two or three days, and other times, for several weeks. During our initial stay in Nanwalek, Medeia and I became very good friends with Wally and Nina Kvasnikoff and their adult children. Sperry was right in his



supposition that Wally and I would get along. Hence, we would stay with Wally and Nina when we returned to the village, as our previous home had been occupied by a family after we left, as per our original agreement with the Council. Sadly, after providing a home for several families in the community, the house now, in 2014, sits abandoned and in disrepair. This is largely due to the fact that the house was rather high maintenance. For example, occupants had to haul water to fill up the forty-gallon holding tank and the only source of heat was a woodstove.



Figure 2.4 Wally and Nina Kvasnikoff

Wally and Nina's home is a two-story, four-bedroom log house that Wally built in the 1970s. During our visits, we would often stay in one of the upstairs bedrooms they reserved for guests. The other upstairs bedroom was occupied by a family friend, and occasionally their nephew. The master bedroom was for Wally, Nina, and their

grandson, while their lower level bedroom was for one of their sons. Also, a storage room had been converted into another bedroom for one of Nina's sisters. So there we were, just the eight of us. Further, as Wally was now 1<sup>st</sup> Chief, visitors who would come to Nanwalek would stop by to pay their respects, and also many local residents would visit and share their opinions regarding various issues. It was not uncommon that there were several locals, and just as many strangers, sitting around the house when I came down in the morning. Imagine twenty people seated on random chairs around the table, hunkered on the floor, or leaning against the wall, all drinking coffee and eating Nina's bacon waffles. Everyone would be talking over each other and as each finished their breakfast, they would slowly filter out to go about the business of the day. During those visits with Wally and Nina, Medeia and I would often just sit around and listen. The stories we heard and the way they were told provided us with so much more insight into the life of the village than what we gained in the previous year-and-half living in a home of our own. Through this experience I came to understand that it is through storytelling and shared understandings that the foundation of self-awareness, as well as a sense of place, is built. Both are critical to a person's and a community's continuing identity. To succeed in a society, one must first know how to behave in that society. These are behaviors that must be shared and learned.

It was during one of our longer stays in the village, in 2008, when Wally and Nina called Medeia and me to the kitchen table. I knew something was going on, as never before had they made an official request regarding anything. These were things that just

happened, not planned. Direct conversations are generally not the way things are handled in Nanwalek, but Wally explained that while they loved having us as guests, that it was time for us to have our own home.

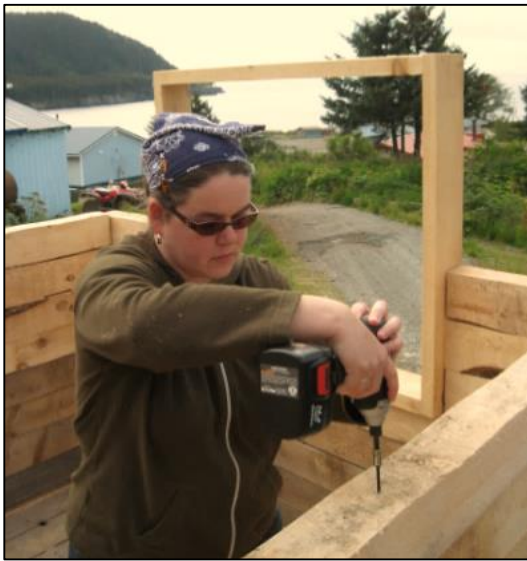


Figure 2.5 Cabin Building

The possibility of owning a home in Nanwalek was unrealistic, and due to the ongoing housing shortage, renting anything in the community was equally unattainable. He must have seen the confusion on my face, because he pointed out the window to a corner of their land. He said that was where we were going to build our cabin and that we would start tomorrow. He further explained that while he and his family would help cut and mill the wood, it would be Medeia's and my job to actually build it. In truth, one of his sons, Emerson, did help quite a bit. That was the extent of the conversation. It took a while, but we eventually finished our little house in the village. It is a wonderful

feeling to know no matter where we go or what we do, we have somewhere to return and friends that wish us “welcome home” when we get there.

By offering my background and explaining how I am affiliated with the community, it is my hope to show that I have a vested interest in providing accurate outcomes and conclusions. Unlike many other researchers, I do not enjoy the benefit of publishing research outcomes and forgetting about them. My research will be judged on an academic level by those at the university, while it will be equally judged on a practical – as well as personal – level by those in the village.

### 2.3 Research Notions

I believe academic research should be interesting as well as add to the current scholarly discussion. Moreover, I believe that the interests and feedback from those on the local level is just as important in determining the overall success of a research project as its scholarly impact. Ongoing community support and contribution in the project is necessary in order to minimize errors and to review the accuracy of research determinations. For these reasons, as well as due to the fact that very little previous research has been done with the Nanwalek Sugpiat apart from various impacts studies, my research has relied upon a high level of participatory observation and local involvement.

In my first chapter, I explained that my research would examine the introduction and use of ATVs by the Nanwalek Sugpiat. It is my belief that we will come to find that

the people of Nanwalek use Hondas as a way to become reconnected with the past by visiting previous settlement sites and other places that hold cultural and personal significance for them. Further, I expect we will find that Honda-usage has also allowed for increased participation in subsistence activities and for more effective resource management.

This research also recognizes that relocation, and subsequently revivalism, is not the same as revitalization. The relationship between revitalization and relocation may be similar to that of development and growth. Unlike relocation, and consequently the opportunity for cultural revivalism that can only happen from within, it is often outsiders who initiate revitalization. Anthony F. C. Wallace argues a revitalization movement is a "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a group to create a new culture" (Rueter and Horstmann 2013: 4). Revitalization theory often relies upon a result being something dissimilar to what went before; however, in relocation I argue that cultures are fluid and are inherently equipped to adapt. Finally, in relocation the success of a culture-group cannot be measured in time. The reasons for this include the fact that a culture is at its oldest just before it dies, and secondly, if one believes that cultures are fluid, then it makes sense that they are neither young nor old, but rather that they just "are" – or "are not" – as it may be. This research is the first of its kind in the region, and as such, it narrows the gap in regards to the available literature about the Nanwalek Sugpiat as well as offers a new perspective in regards to the impact brought about by the introduction of new technologies.

## 2.4 Research Genesis

It is my aim to situate this research within the broader conversation about adaptive traditions, boundary-based decision-making and, most importantly, relocation. I expect to demonstrate that relocation is a part of the everyday reality of this Native community. Through relocation, I take Pertti Peltö's notion of delocalization and turn it upside-down. The premise of delocalization being, "...the tendency for any territorially defined population to become increasingly dependent on resources, information flow and socioeconomic linkages with systems of energy and resources outside their particular area" (Peltö 1987: 31).

In the winter of 1967, Pertti Peltö, a physician and medical anthropologist, received a letter from Arto Sverloff, a reindeer herder and an old friend of Peltö's, from Sevettijärvi, Finland. This correspondence, in part, stated that, "No one wants to drive with reindeer anymore, but it must be by Ski-Doo or car. It is particularly sad since reindeer work is no longer reindeer work, but better some kind of play... This is the most frightening thing for us who live with reindeer herding" (Peltö: 1987: 69).

Peltö's involvement with the Skolt Sámi started in 1957. His initial research was psychological in nature and occurred before the arrival of snowmobiles. Beginning in 1968, Peltö went back to Sevettijärvi to investigate the introduction of snowmobiles into the Skolt cultural group and published his findings in 1973. Before that time, he had authored and co-authored several articles as well as three books. The most popular,

Anthropological Research, *The Structure of Inquiry*, was published in 1970 and was instantly celebrated in the field of anthropology.

In his review, Charles McNett declared that “[...] if the new generation of students, as well as the established generation of anthropologists, will take Pelto’s work to heart, it can only be to the advantage of anthropology” (McNett 1971: 1437). Additionally, he also emphasized Pelto’s original remarks, that "THE SINGLE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL RE-SEARCH IS THE FAILURE TO PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO DEFINITION OF UNITS AND VARIABLES” (McNett 1971: 1437, emphasis in original).

Three years later, Pelto published *The Snowmobile Revolution: Technology and Social Change in the Arctic*. Unlike his previous texts, it was met with less than favorable reviews. For instance, Tim Ingold, who also conducted extensive fieldwork with Sámi reindeer herders around the Sevetijärvi region (Ingold 1976b), remarked that, “This book cannot by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as a work of scholarship. Unfortunately, it is not the only publication of its kind, but represents a type of book whose current mass-production is a growing insult to the craft of anthropology” (Ingold 1976a: 146-147). Jonathan Benthall’s 1979 positive review of Pelto’s and his wife’s, Gretel Pelto’s, book *The Cultural Dimension of the Human Adventure* sheds light to Pelto’s changing perceptions of ideas regarding the role of an anthropologist: “The Peltos conclude that the applied anthropologist’s most useful role is as a cultural broker or

advocate [...] therefore, they argue, the main justification for anthropology must be in its power to liberate the mind” (Benthall 1979: 11).

From the previously cited reviews it becomes clear that Pelto’s views on both the significance of anthropology as well as the way ethnographic researchers should conduct their work has considerably changed over the decade. He turned increasingly towards the practice of advocacy that also manifested in his professional engagements. He was a co-developer of the Center for International Community Health Studies at the University of Connecticut, acted as the co-consultant to the Ford Foundation-funded project, *Network for Sexuality and Sexual Risk Research*, based in India, through which project he co-authored *Sexuality in the Time of AIDS: Contemporary Perspectives from Communities in India*. He also became active in many humanitarian and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe (CARE), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), as well as various community and activist groups.

While Pelto has always stressed the importance of ‘applied research’ regarding the usefulness of anthropology, he increasingly turned toward activist anthropology in his goal to actively involve local researchers in realizing specific politically involved agendas at his field sites. For instance, Pelto’s major fieldwork sites included northern Finland (Lapland), northern Minnesota with Chippewa communities, Ciudad Sahagun, Temascalsingo, Sri Lanka as well as urban/rural Bangladesh and India. His work with the



Chippewa viewed mental health in an ecological context of community, while his work in Ciudad Sahagun illustrated the impact of industrialization on traditional agricultural communities. Further, his study in Temascalsingo, Mexico, dealt with nutrition. Lastly, his work in Bangladesh and India was primarily centered on the promotion and legitimatization of anthropology as a social science as well as research on sexuality and health risks of those in the region. This activist approach also laid the foundation for his interpretation of the Skolt Sámi case study, and his creation of the concept: delocalization.

## 2.5 Introduction of Research Design

In my research, I relied upon an analysis of primary sources, relevant literature, and a high level of collaboration with those in the village. My on-site data collection began by living in Nanwalek and seeing people using their Hondas, daydreaming about them, fixing them, complaining about them, selling and buying them, going hunting on them, piling them high with freight off the planes, pulling skiffs with them, taking them up the trail to get wood, or simply packing them up with food and family for a picnic. Shortly afterwards, I started interviewing available local people about Hondas. These interviews were largely informal and open to anyone who was able to legally consent and wanted to participate according to Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations.

Through these discussions, I was often able to identify key actors within the community based in part on their personal experiences and skill sets. I followed up this

initial stage with additional structured interviews with some of my previous participants. The determining factor on who would contribute in these more formal interviews was largely centered on finding people willing to participate. The interview topics ranged from discussions regarding cultural norms to personal stories about one or more experiences while operating a Honda. I found that while I came to these interview sessions with an outline of questions I wanted to discuss, the participants were often eager to inject new lines of thoughts.

As illustrated in the diagram below, Edward Spicer explains, “It may not begin at the point the interviewer had expected, or disclosed the items in the order in which he had thought of them. Perhaps a first interview, moreover, does not touch on all the items. Nevertheless, through skillfully keeping the interviewee talking along the lines of his own interest, and in his own way, answers to most of the questions can be obtained” (Spicer 1952: 126).

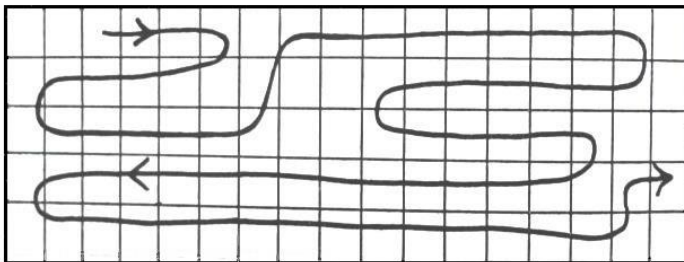


Figure 2.6 Spicer Diagram of Course of an Interview

The legitimacy of research depends on who is recording the data. Jean-Guy Goulet explains, “One can never tell all that has occurred in the field, however, but must necessarily select what events and encounters to narrate. Moreover, the telling of the

account is always from the perspective of the ethnographer, who highlights certain features of incidents and draws out their implications for the research” (Goulet 1998: 1). Goulet further argues that researchers should become competent in their new environment. This includes learning a basic understanding of the language as well as “absorbing” the new sights, sounds, rhythms, silences, feelings and tastes. He continues to suggest that a person must “fit” into the community instead of being in conflict with the localized societal norms in order to do quality research. The remaining of this chapter discusses the various notions of research design including my methods and methodologies.

## 2.6 Coordinating Outsider Techniques with Insider Perspectives

While doing my master’s research in Nanwalek, I found that I had a good comprehension of what scholarly research is and of its goals, but I lacked the knowledge of how important the inclusion of the Native and local perspective is to a successful project. From the scholarly perspective, often, though not always, the overall goal of the research is the collection and interpretation of data with the subsequent analysis and publishing of findings. In this process, the research findings are often applied in some fashion, or more likely, provide theoretical evidence for some other study. From the Native perspective, often, though not always, the overall goal of research is based on a specific current need or want. As an outcome, the interpretation of data and subsequent outcomes of the analysis are often put into immediate practice.

As noted, the purpose of research is, more often than not, defined by a particular group's immediate wants and needs. For the insider researcher, he or she produces results that will be tested by fellow community members and ultimately judged on a personal level. Oscar Kawagley explains that an Indigenous researcher has the responsibility to ensure the research question is both a reality and appropriate in the minds of those being researched (Kawagley 1995). The locally disengaged researcher does not face this trial as often their conclusions are not tested or reviewed at the local level. Further, many of such outside researchers have no personal involvement at all with those with whom they work with on the project.

While the categories “insider” and “outsider” do not automatically equate with Native and non-Native researchers, it does evoke the need to reflect on the notion of social boundaries as they relate to designing and conducting research. This notion can be viewed through Fredrik Barth's (1998) discussion on ethnic boundaries as well as through different attitudes on data collection and dissemination. An outsider researcher is often “looking in,” examining a specific topic within a circumscribed territorial boundary, by crossing a well-articulated cultural/social border from outside to within. Conversely, an insider researcher is working within a community while looking outside to share and distribute the results of the project within mutually agreed boundaries. This system of collaboration and sharing is a concept I draw on in outlining the notion of boundary-based decision-making in future chapters.

## 2.7 Local Relevance

In research, knowledge is classified, departmentalized, stored and used to determine appropriate actions for a task or in response to an incident or event. This is true for research conducted by all researchers alike, be it insider, outsider, Indigenous, or non-Native. However, the method in which these actions are carried out and how the research data manifests itself are quite different. Further, it is important to remember that worldviews and social precepts that guide said researches are specific to the culture of the one conducting such research. Social precepts and worldviews varying between groups of people mean that the way in which a person interacts and defines the world around him or her varies as well as for example in understanding and explaining how ecosystems, cosmology, spirituality, politics, humanity, and society as whole, works. These social precepts and worldviews are commonly referred to as cultural knowledge, which actively governs locally acceptable social behavior and locally specific cultural logic.

Cultural knowledge, in part, is the basis for the way people in a culture believe something is right or wrong, or to be more precise, acceptable or unacceptable. It is a determinant for actions taken. People learn cultural knowledge automatically as they grow up through a process known as enculturation. Outsiders have grown up outside of a particular culture and, hence, are uninformed of this particular cultural knowledge. Outside researchers can have knowledge about a culture and their various ways, but it is knowledge without genuine understanding and it is knowledge without a localized

connection. In essence, and in this context, it is only information gathered and data collected. Furthermore, outsiders can, over time and with active local engagement, learn to recognize, understand, interpret and correctly apply local cultural knowledge. However, by researching cultures for a short period of time, a point of reference is nonexistent. In other words, often the culture's recent and distant past is not taken in to account, or conversely, taken out of context.

In 1922, Bronislaw Malinowski argued that the goal for ethnographic research was, "to grasp the Native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his visions of his world" (Malinowski 1922: 25). Yet this is a goal that is at best, on occasion, adhered to, and at worse, more frequently, ignored by those doing academic research within Native communities. Because of outsider researchers who often fail to grasp a local point-of-view in their scholarship, many people within communities now feel a need to oversee research being done by such groups or individuals.

Kawagley (1995) noted that it is those "being researched" who should have final approval of the methodologies being used. Several Native communities in Alaska have come to the conclusion that much of the past research was wrong – both in methodology and conclusions. These communities are determined that these past mistakes should not be repeated. Today's researchers must not only actively engage in collaboration, but also in deconstructing ill-used methodologies and rebuilding new ones in conjunction with research participants and community members.

For instance, during my fieldwork, I was approached by a village councilmember to help write an ordinance that would protect their traditional knowledge and cultural property. The first thing we did was to author various requirements that would have to be agreed upon by outside researchers before any fieldwork activities could begin. The second issue discussed was centered on the selling and purchasing of artifacts and their proper process of handling them when found on public lands. The final section's concern was primarily with cultural performances and the recording of such. The regulation was passed and approved by the Nanwalek IRA Council. This ordinance requires researchers to abide by certain rules and protocols. By letting researchers know there are requirements in place provides them with a roadmap on how to proceed and organize their inquiries.

From my perspective, researchers often forget they have an outsider status, essentially, as guests to an otherwise established and efficient social structure. I do not regard the term 'outsider' as a tainted word, as it merely refers to one as a person that does not share in the specific cultural group's communal cultural consciousness. However, it could be argued that because one is an outsider that one may never attain the status of host. Consequently such outsiders speaking "for the good of the community," and its members are often, at best, naïve.

Cultural consciousness includes metacognition, that is, cognition about cognition. Metacognition includes the knowledge about what cultural tools are available and their particular function. People from outside the culture are largely void

of this knowledge while also often being equally, or even more so, aware of the collective world around them than community members. Nevertheless, the degree of understanding of the immediate reality surrounding them at a point in time does differ between insiders and outsiders.

As previously noted, those researchers who enter into a community, culture-group, compact society, etc., must understand that total acceptance within said groups is unrealistic. This impossibility is not simply produced by the fact that one may not have a relative within the group, though that may be a part of the reason, but also by the facts I previously outlined, such as a lack of shared understandings, metacognition, and cultural consciousness of significance. Concerning communal significance, Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her text, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, suggests, “In all community approaches/process – that is, methodology and method – is highly important. In many projects the process is far more important than the outcome. Processes are expected to be respectful, to enable people, to heal and to educate...” (Smith 1999: 128).

I believe, as others, that research is most productive when the research team consists of members from both outside and inside the community. With the inclusion of members from academia, it ensures proper funding, different perspectives, and a certain amount of credibility in academic circles. The presence of local cultural experts will safeguard that traditional and cultural knowledge are included in the design of the



study while incorporating a local point-of-view so that the findings are credible for those in the community.

#### 2.7.1 Communication on the Local Level

Each village has its own norms, and it was possible only after I learned some of those norms to conduct an interview that had validity. When I first came to the village, I had the mindset that I was visiting, and that I would talk with people. However, somewhere along the way, I realized that I was living in the village, and I was communicating with people. This communication meant I was able to offer my opinion on a variety of items, listen to gossip about others, and most importantly, make jokes. Claude Levi-Strauss said the experience of fieldwork represents for an anthropologist, “not the goal of his profession, nor a completion of his schooling, or yet a technical apprenticeship – but a crucial stage of his education, prior to which he may possess miscellaneous knowledge that will never form a whole” (Levi-Strauss 1968: 373). The experience of fieldwork for me was indeed a stage in my education and, perhaps, the most important phase. I came to realize the importance of adaptability and applied knowledge. Moreover, I was able to recognize that the use of collaborative research may be the primary factor in whether one’s research is successful, locally relevant, and useful.

During my fieldwork, I spent a lot of time visiting with people in Nanwalek. This seems like a kind of obvious statement to make, but I have seen several researchers and

outsiders come into the village and not manage to have one off-the-record conversation with anyone. My conclusions were made possible because I was actively participating in the everyday life of the village. I went with ‘the guys’ up the trail to get wood in the winter and during the summer I would use my Honda to pull boats and when I needed food, I would drive down to the end of the beach to ‘combat-fish’ for salmon. I even let others borrow my Honda when they had need of it. All this helped me understand how these machines are woven into the everyday fabric of the community and the local web of favors and obligations.

#### 2.7.2 How My Honda Went Hunting Story

What set me apart from my neighbors was that while working on my chores, I would ask a lot of strange questions and I took a lot of photos. For example, when I heard a loud shot while sitting at the table enjoying a cup of coffee, I went outside to investigate. I walked up the road and turned the corner only to find a dead bear straddled across my Honda. It seems, after someone had shot the bear, it rolled down the hill and my Honda was the closest to it. The hunter asked if he could borrow my Honda so he could take the bear down to the lagoon to clean it. I said sure – after all, what I am going to say really? “No?” But first, I wanted to take some pictures. They were thinking dinner and I was thinking photo opportunity.



Figure 2.7 Bear on Honda

In reality, nobody thought my interest in Hondas was strange. In fact, most everyone in Nanwalek has a keen interest in Hondas. But they did think it was strange that I was writing a dissertation centered on the machines. Peoples' initial reaction generally ranged from doubtful to genuine disbelief. The same folks who would spend hour after hour talking about these machines would ask me, "What is there to write about?" When I first explained my dissertation to people, I would generally say that it wasn't really about Hondas; rather it was about introduction and impacts of new technologies to compact cultural groups. This explanation satisfied some, but just as many still seemed befuddled.

At one point I heard that a local mechanic was working on a Honda and since he didn't have the right part, he somehow managed to fix the problem with a bungee cord. I went to have a look and asked if I could take a photo of it. While I was given permission to do so, it was followed by the inevitable question, "What are you doing again?" For some reason, this time I answered the question differently, and said, "I am looking at how Hondas may help people reconnect with places and things that have cultural and personal significance... Like how people are using Hondas to go to Dogfish to get eggs, like in the old days, and stuff like that." To which he replied, "Cool."

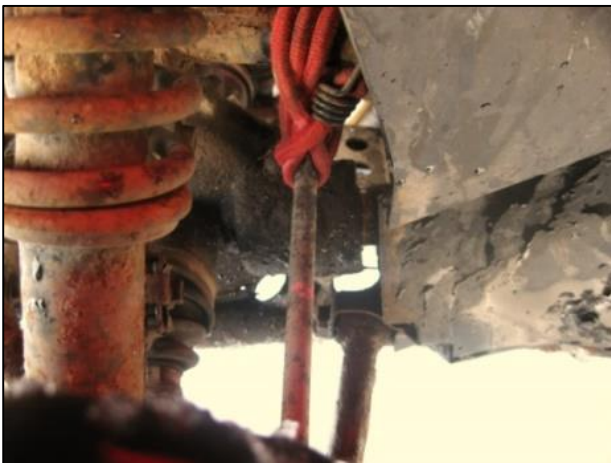


Figure 2.8 Bungee Cord Fix

## 2.8 Conclusion

About halfway through reviewing my data, I noticed that some central themes started to emerge such as, health concerns, places that count, relocalization, and decision-making, to name a few. Originally, I had planned to concentrate primarily on decision-making, but the more I inquired, the more I realized I had to accommodate for

new directions. Eventually, relocalization and places that count became the main areas of discussion, while decision-making supplemented other arguments and conclusions. This changed primarily because of the feedback I received from various community members during our formal and informal discussions. For instance, I found that asking people why something was important to them prompted more detailed responses and reflections than asking how something became important to them. Likewise, following people while observing how they used Hondas and asking them questions while they were using the machines yielded answers that were both rich in detail and context. Moreover, this research method also led to further follow-up questions and opportunities to explore how local people view Hondas within their own cultural environment.

All in all, by continually refining my research methods based on active feedback from community members, I was able to incorporate collaborative research techniques throughout the project. It was my intention to continue this trend even after the data collection phase has ended. In fact, I wrote part of this dissertation in Nanwalek, which made it possible to clarify and update previously gathered data. It also made it possible to keep in touch with community members regarding their expectations regarding my research. As I revealed some of my findings during informal discussions, local people often expressed their opinions whether it was surprise, curiosity, agreement, or disagreement. For instance, many people had the firm conviction that Hondas were culpable in contributing to chronic illnesses such as diabetes by reducing the daily

amounts of physical activity. As I demonstrate in chapter four, this is, in fact, not necessarily the case for the energy used in walking is on par with driving a Honda. Discussing this particular topic regularly caused people to stop and think about their own Honda use. After reflecting on their own physical activity levels and needs, most people, especially those using Hondas for daily chores, came to cautiously agree with this statement. In support of this notion they cited the toll steering Hondas on rough, uneven terrains take on their arms, shoulders, and upper body musculature. Likewise, they mentioned the soreness they get in their hips, thighs, and sides they often experience after long rides.

Furthermore, I expect my research outcomes will further contribute to breaking down incorrect stereotypes about both the introduction of new technologies as well as about Hondas. During my fieldwork, locals often came to our cabin and remarked how quiet it was without phones and TVs. They enjoyed their time sitting around, visiting, drinking tea and remembering the village as it used to be in their youth. They almost always continued to explain that seeking peace and quiet from the hubbub of the village is one of the reasons they relish the time they can spend in their cabins on their allotments. They remarked how quiet it can be away from roads and Hondas. Yet when I asked them how they got to their allotments, they would invariably say ‘by Honda.’ I foresee that my dissertation will help people develop a better insight into this dichotomy of wishing to avoid Hondas while also having to regularly rely on them. Further, I believe the text may relieve some of the pressure caused by the contradiction

between the local usefulness of Hondas and the unrealistic expectations of the outside world towards Native people to live without modern amenities in order to be considered ‘traditional’ or ‘authentic.’

On a practical level, I also hope that my findings will assist the community in developing new ordinances pertaining to increased traffic that will be the results of their ongoing road project. Finally, based on my previous experiences with local people’s reaction to research reports, I expect my findings will help community members and leaders alike in assessing, acquiring, managing, and using new technologies in future community development projects and initiatives.

## Chapter 3: The Use and Maintenance of ATVs

### 3.1 Introduction

Societies judge new technologies that are introduced based upon the wants and needs of their individual members. Technologies within a society become a norm only when the majority of its members decide that the new offerings are valid and integral, and/or necessary. In this sense, the Sugpiat of Nanwalek adopted, adapted, used, and maintained Hondas based on their own knowledge system and the need to access places that were important to them for a variety of reasons.

The term ‘Indigenous knowledge system’ in itself is actually a correction of the previously accepted phrase, ‘traditional knowledge system.’ These terms have now become to represent different meanings. The term ‘traditional’ is vague in its representations and for many is synonymous with fixed, habitual, and rigid, though this is a great misinterpretation of the term, which in fact means “practiced across generations, including to the present.” Hence, all individuals and all groups possess and practice traditions, and in this way traditional. Further, it does not represent the fact that Native groups were and are fluid associations and are continually adapting to new problems with new solutions. Indigenous knowledge systems are bodies of knowledge that are built upon by Indigenous cultural groups over a period of time. The transmission of this knowledge often occurs through oral means. Further, they include



the understanding that everything is interconnected and it encompasses the immediate world in conjunction with those previously held traditions.

A.P. Cohen argues that tradition is often shown in the, “symbolic expressions of community [referring] to a putative past” however, “it would be a mistake, [...] to characterize such responses as merely, ‘traditionalistic’, implying that the community in question is mired in its own past and is unable to face up to present imperatives” (Cohen 1985: 99). It is important to remember that traditions and customs are neither genetic nor eternal; rather, they are learned, modified, created, and at times, discarded. Further, these actions are often done under the direction of the cultural group. At times, this occurs in reaction to an outside force, while at others, it is in response to the internal and immediate needs and wants of the group.

### 3.2 Honda Usage and Tradition

Before the 1970s, most materials people gathered or harvested were carried, dragged, or floated to the village. With the sustained popularity of Hondas, also came a demand for trail improvements. Specifically, they needed to become wider and smoother. The village of Nanwalek requested, and was provided with, heavy equipment from the state so that they could cut a larger trail. Those who operated the heavy equipment were all local hires or volunteers. In speaking with one of the original operators, Wally Kvasnikoff (interview, May 05, 2010), the circumstances of this job became clear. Wally remembered that it was dangerous work, as much of the trail was

cut on a steep hillside. He told the account of how his dozer started to slide but was caught by a tree. Had the stump not been there, he would have plunged into a deep ravine and probably to his death. Robert Melrose (interview, August 5, 2008), a soil technician with Seabright Survey and Design explained the soil in an around Nanwalek is particularly slippery as it is volcanic ash over glacier silt. He also added that this type of soil poses problems, and “as far as construction goes, it is not a great load bearing soil, but you have underneath it is rock, rock fragments and you have unweathered till.” Yet today, these improvements allow for both Hondas and small trucks to use these trails to gain better access to allotments as well as to subsistence and harvest areas. The increased access to allotments has also allowed for increased trail building and use, and the current repairs of the routes are done by volunteers from the village usually in the springtime after the snow has completely melted.

Nelson Graburn argues, “Tradition is usually seen as the opposite to modernity, yet it is much loved by modernity. Traditions are continually being created, not in some past time immemorial, but during modernity. Even these new, historically created phenomena are often quickly assumed to be age-old or timeless, because people want them to be so and because the customs become invested with authority that is difficult to challenge” (Graburn 2001: 6). Likewise, Eric Hobsbawm contends that members of a community often invented many of the traditions practiced by that society today in an effort to justify or add importance to the group. Hobsbawm also makes distinctions between traditions and customs, “a custom is what judges do; tradition... is the wig,

robe and other formal paraphernalia and ritualized practices surrounding their substantial action. The decline of ‘custom’ inevitably changes the “tradition” with which it is habitually intertwined” (Hobsbawm 2012: 3). Traditions provide cultural groups with the possibility to both connect with the past and to live successfully within the present. Without tradition one would no longer know the difference between right and wrong, accepted behaviors and deviant ones. Traditions are those things that are passed down from one generation to the next. Traditions govern and are associated with norms, and norms are the boundaries to which a group is able to define their own understandings and responses to an event. It is through the norms, or boundaries, of a group that people ultimately decide whether or not to define something as legitimate.

As discussed, the introduction of a new technology to a group only becomes a norm when a significant portion of the membership recognizes it as such. Hobsbawm discussed the modification of traditions within a group. His notion centered on what he termed as the invention of tradition, “...in short, they are the responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own by quasi-obligatory repetition” (Hobsbawm 2012: 2). I should mention that the word “invented” might be seen to have negative connotations within many Native communities, whereas, the term “adaptive” may better reflect the concept. Therefore, this is the terminology I am using in my analysis.

Of the many adaptive traditions in Nanwalek one is especially meaningful and of particular consequence: the familial allotments. The word “allotment” is reflective in

that it is a portion of land allotted to person and subsequent heirs; however, perhaps a more descriptive definition of what an allotment is can be made through the concept of the “heirloom.” An heirloom is defined as any treasured possession handed down from generation to generation. In this case, the treasured possession is land that has personal, and at times historical, significance to one’s own immediate family.

Further, as Nanwalek was one of several seasonal settlements, many of which are currently uninhabited, with the advent of Hondas local people were able to reestablish traditional boundaries, or in other words, they relocated the places that mattered to them. Trips to these sites are now commonplace. For those in Nanwalek, pilgrimages to Qugyugtuliq (Dogfish Bay) are especially popular with the young and older alike. Groups of people often travel there to hunt, gather and, perhaps just as importantly, to remember.

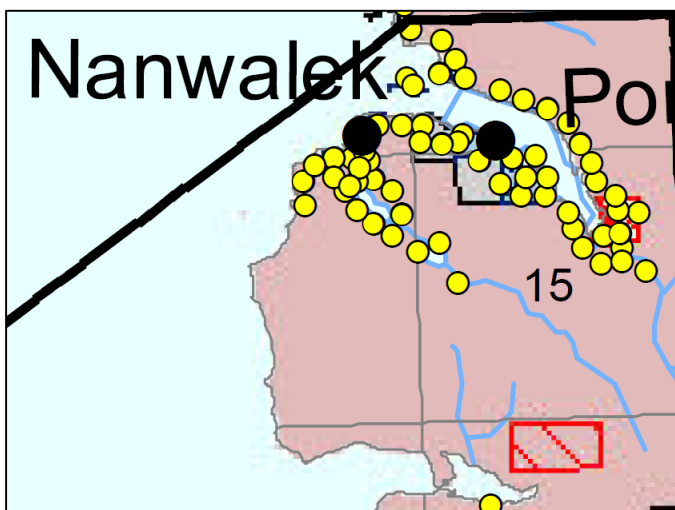


Figure 3.1 Nanwalek Allotment Map

Leo Anahonak (interview, June 27, 2008) explained that people go to Dogfish more often nowadays than in the past and he thought this was mostly due to the availability of Hondas. Before Hondas, people would generally walk over to Qugyugtuliq, which took about 7 hours. In comparison, driving over on a Honda takes about an hour and a half. Leo said he would “go on a half a tank of gas with [having to put the Honda on] reserve” on the way back. Leo’s gas tank could hold two and half gallons of gas, which meant it would take approximately one and a half gallons of gas with reserve included. He also explained that going to Dogfish by skiff was a lot faster, about 40 minutes one way, but it also takes seven or eight gallons of gas round trip, almost five times as much as a Honda.

Prior to Hondas, groups would walk to get wood from near the waterfall, which is about a mile away from the village. Men would walk up the trail during wintertime, cut down a tree with handsaws, peel off the bark to lighten the load, and pack the log back to the village on their shoulders (Brewster 2004). Walking the trail takes a good hour but with the improved trails and Honda usage the travel time is approximately fifteen minutes. Currently, some people go as far as Third Lake to get wood, which is nearly three times the distance from the village.

Here the question arises, “Why did people originally walk so far away from the village to get wood?” The answer is twofold. Firstly, Nanwalek is located directly below a hillside, and had the harvesting of trees taken place closer to the village, the result would have been erosion and subsequent landslides that could have caused damage to

both the village and the much-needed arteries to other settlements and subsistence areas. Secondly, the waterfall is the ideal spot to begin to float logs down to the village. Upriver of the waterfall the creek is full of obstructions, but in contrast, downriver is relatively free of obstacles.

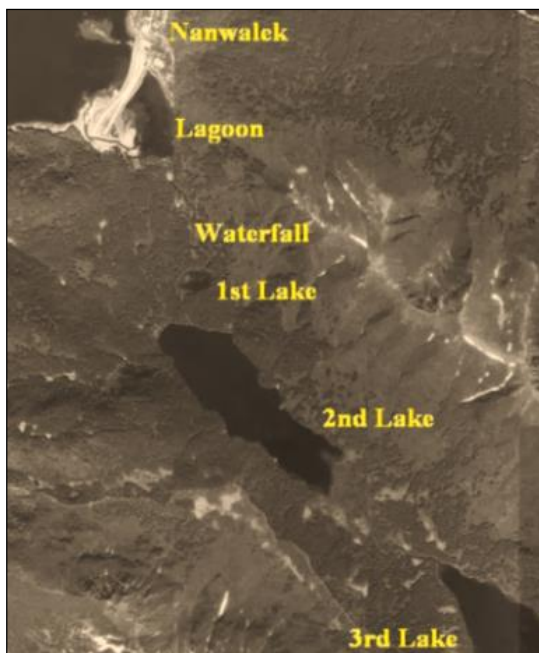


Figure 3.2 Local Map

Next to food and water, wood has been the most essential commodity in Nanwalek. Wood was the main building material, the source of heat for homes and water, as well as the fuel for cooking. In the 1980s, nearly every household had a woodstove. Today, almost every home in the village uses a combination of oil and electricity for their primary sources of heat and cooking, yet, many still have a woodstove. It is used all winter, but its two primary applications are to keep people

warm when the electricity stops working, which often happens in the village, as well as to cut down on oil used for heating. Based on this example and on the previous discussion on the process of getting wood, I argue that it should not be assumed that the introduction of a new technology automatically wipes out tradition; rather, as it is often the case, these offerings are integrated into the current routine.

Interestingly, even with the use of Hondas, the people of Nanwalek still hunt, harvest, and gather in groups, as has always been the custom. It is the combination of customs and traditions that largely makes up a group's knowledge system. In the 1966 text, *The Savage Mind*, Levi-Strauss reasoned that knowledge systems are based on the needs and wants of particular cultural groups. Consequently, to generalize and compare logic and reason between groups is often a mistake, and at times, ethnocentric. He further theorized that logic and reason has been consistent throughout time and between cultures, with merely the problems and subsequent solutions being different. Of those solutions that varied through time are the tools available to a culture. In the case of the Sugpiat of Nanwalek many new tools have been accepted by community in the last forty years, perhaps one of most important being the ATV.

### 3.3 Hondas and Nanwalek

In 1967, Honda began to look for a way to offset slumping motorcycle sales that occurred during the winter months. Historically, the Honda Corporation has avoided

entering into the snow-machine market and sought to offer a product more similar to those 6x6 vehicles offered by Attex, and later by ARGO.



Figure 3.3 Attex / ARGO

One of Honda's slogan at the time was, "no borders for good products" (Demizu 2003: 313) and their goal was to offer a machine that could handle slippery conditions while still providing maximum maneuverability. Less than two years after the concept, Honda had mass produced their first ATV, the 1970 model US90. Early on, these vehicles were referred to as ATCs or All-Terrain Cycles. The first Honda ATCs were much smaller than current ATV models. They also had only three wheels and included a swivel down handlebar so that one could fit it in a large car trunk or station wagon, and cost \$595 in the early 70s. Adjusted for inflation, today's price would be approximately \$3200. While it was not cheap, it was almost a third of the cost of a new Attex. The power for these initial Honda ATVs came by way of an 89cc single cylinder engine, four-speed transmission, and an automatic clutch.



The first Honda ATCs came to Nanwalek in the early 1970s. They had a solid frame and balloon tires that provided the only suspension. The initial models were underpowered, wheelie prone, had no racks, and were immediately loved by everyone. In truth, a person took quite a beating while riding these first generation ATVs, but this was deemed as mostly an inconvenience, if not part of the fun.

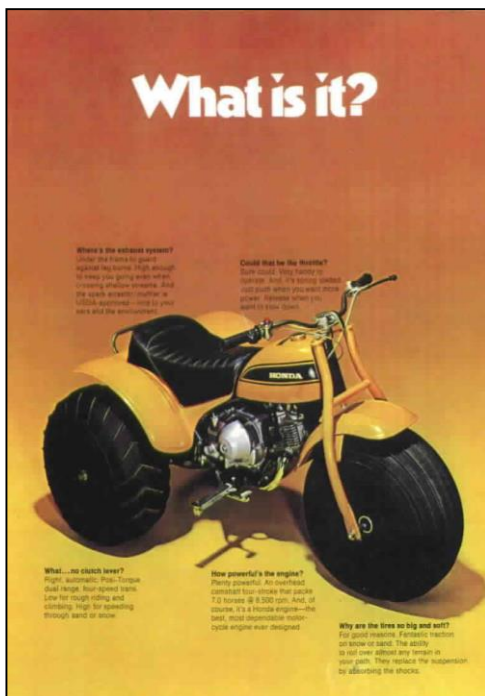


Figure 3.4 1970 US 90

Preliminary, ATV usage in Nanwalek was for transportation and light hauling, i.e., taking the trash to the dump, etc. As horsepower increased, so did the machine's duties and popularity. By the early 1980s, almost every family in the community owned at least one Honda, and today, in 2014, it is not uncommon for families to own more than one of these machines.

The closest city to Nanwalek that is on a road system is Homer. Homer's current Honda dealer is All Seasons Honda. Unfortunately, when ATVs first became popular in Nanwalek, the nearest dealer was Alaska Cycle Center in Anchorage, which was over 250 miles away. Those in the village who wanted to purchase a Honda in the 1970s and early 1980s had one of two options. They could either pick it up in Anchorage, or order it through mail. In the case of the latter, the Honda would have been shipped to Homer and subsequently sent to Nanwalek by way of airplane or boat. Also during this early period, Nanwalek had no gas pumps and one would have to travel to Port Graham to get fuel for their vehicles.



Figure 3.5 Early ATV in Nanwalek

As mentioned, when Hondas first arrived, they were used for light duty work and for getting from point A to point B. Yet, as the machines became more powerful, people increasingly started to use them for hauling and towing. The items towed varied, but most were for hauling wood. The most common were logs that had either drifted on

the beach or those that had been felled near the trail. The size of the load would vary and excise a toll, but it did not destroy the Honda. As Eric Kvasnikoff (interview, April 9, 2007), a local Honda mechanic explained, “The transmissions were tough and wouldn’t wear out. They would go through a lot of chains. The chains would stretch or break before the transmission.”

### 3.4 Hondas as Indicators of Status

Local popularity and attainability of Hondas in the 1980s coincided with a period of regionalized prosperity through commercial fishing and as the aftereffect of the monies spent on the Exxon Valdez cleanup. As Leo Anahonak (interview, June 27, 2008) explained, getting a Honda in those years was much easier, as it took only “one good year of fishing, that was it.” During this period, if repairs were excessive, one would simply purchase a new Honda, but most owners would still keep their older models around for parts. This recycling of Hondas and parts is a current trend as well. By the 1990s, commercial fishing was no longer profitable, and refurbishing older Hondas became more commonplace than purchasing new models. Especially for teenagers and younger families, obtaining a brand new model can be challenging, but they can often spend part of their earnings and their dividends to buy a used model. If they are not mechanically inclined, they can ask for help and advice from other relatives who are familiar with Hondas. That being said, currently, those in Nanwalek with extra money often spend it on buying a new Honda model. Further, purchasing a new Honda is a

constant goal for many families. Leo Anahonak (interview, June 27, 2008) remarked: “Everybody likes them. Everybody would like to own one.”

Currently, there are a lot of Ranchers and Foremen models from the early to mid-2000s in Nanwalek, which is a good indication of a time period that was relatively prosperous for many in the village. Mass purchases of Hondas are largely a matter of circumstance, and often cannot happen without a robust localized economy. Selective purchases, however, are mostly based on need, as for instance the wearing out of existing Hondas beyond repair, or outgrowing the currently used machines.

### 3.5 Eric Kvasnikoff’s Story



Figure 3.6 Eric Kvasnikoff

Eric Kvasnikoff is a local Honda mechanic and one of only three in the village. Of these, Eric is the most popular. This popularity is based on his facilities, tools, service,

and most importantly, his expertise. Eric's grandfather, Herman Tanape, started Eric's education in regards to how to fix Hondas on the ATC 110, 185s, and the 200m models. Herman Tanape also taught other people in the village how to repair Hondas, but, as Eric pointed out, his outside education in regards to small engine repair has also been valuable.

Eric once gave an older three-wheeler model, a 1985 Big Red, to his brother, Emerson, for his birthday. The ATC200E Big Red featured both a suspension system and multiple racks, making it the first true utility ATV. The Honda had been abandoned in the nearby village of Port Graham, as the previous owner considered it junk. After getting permission, Eric took his skiff over and picked up the remnants of the machine and brought it back to Nanwalek. Eric explained one of his techniques in refurbishing the ATC: "The fenders were cracked, but I took a blow torch and melted the fenders into place, then I used a spatula as a putty knife on the cracks and smoothed them out. At first you could still see the cracks, but I used the spray paint and sprayed them. After that, you couldn't tell they were there." After a few days, he refurbished the entire machine and gave it to his brother in time for his birthday. Emerson used the three-wheeler for nearly four years before selling it to his neighbor. His neighbor, in turn, used it for another year before getting a newer model. The Big Red is now parked and Eric is currently considering getting the Honda back. As he remarked, "One man's junk is another man's treasure."

Eric got his first Honda, an ATC 70, at the age of seven by working odd jobs, such as cleaning yards, chopping wood, painting, etc., and filled numerous coffee cans with coins so that he could eventually afford the machine. Though he was very young at the time, and though he had only worked for a few months, he had saved more than half the money to buy his Honda. His folks, unbeknownst to him at the time, recognized his achievement and provided the remainder of the money needed, telling him simply, that he had done a great job and raised enough money.



Figure 3.7 Honda ATC 70

Interestingly, and in contrast to most people today, Eric mentioned that he always wore a helmet when riding his Honda. To quote, “Every time I jumped on it I always wore a helmet... nowadays you don’t see kids wearing helmets”, he goes on to explain that if you look at the labels on the ATV it is clearly stated that everyone under 16 is supposed to wear a helmet. He goes on to explain these new machines are “beasts”

and that there are a lot of kids behind the wheel. Compared to earlier models that were of relatively low horsepower, the newer models are, on average, four to five times more powerful.

Once Eric got his Honda, he continued to work. He took a drill and put a hole in a bracket below the “sissy bar” so that he could connect a trailer and haul garbage more efficiently. As he explained, the more garbage he hauled, the more money he had to buy gas, and the more gas he had, more often he could ride his three-wheeler.

When it is time to fix a Honda, people look for the parts necessary for repairs from older machines. If none are available, and it cannot be locally made, people give in and place an order with the dealer in Homer. Used parts may come from the customer or from Eric’s inventory. Eric charges for his parts, but at a much-reduced rate versus new parts. Also, he notes that old parts can often be modified to fix newer models such as axles, relay switches, hookups, etc. Eric also noted that while it is nice to have a local person available with experience in fixing Hondas, as well as having parts from older ATVs, these are not the reasons why Hondas have remained the most popular machines in the village. Rather, the main reason is that they are simply superior machines. He further suggested that if an ATV came along that met the needs of the community better, then people would have no problem switching over to the new brand.

When it comes to ordering new parts, most people contact Homer’s All Seasons Honda and the NAPA Auto Center. Once the parts are available, they are then flown into the village by way of a Cessna light aircraft. These stores drive the parts to the airport,

which in turn puts them on a plane for their half-hour trip to Nanwalek. The Honda and NAPA stores do not charge a fee for dropping off parts to the airport. The current freight charges, by Homer Air, are a \$15 minimum up to 50 pounds, and 31 cents for each pound after. The airlines that operate locally are Homer Air and Smokey Bay Air. As they both know Eric, they call him ahead of time to let him know the parts are on their way. Eric says he does not use the mail to get his parts, instead he asks that parts be delivered to the airport. Yet, at times, access to Nanwalek is halted due to poor weather or runway conditions.

Eric said he once considered opening up a certified Honda shop within the village, but also realized that to operate such a business, someone would have to have a problem with a machine almost every day. He did not think that would happen, nor did he believe people would be able to pay a higher repair rate. The current hourly shop rate at All Seasons Honda is \$90.00. Eric's minimum charge is around \$40.00 for a simple bearing change, to \$200 for jobs that take a couple of days. Eric notes that early in his career, he often undercut his fee, but he ended up hating working on Hondas. By giving people deals on parts and labor it was costing him money. It was not so much that people were taking advantage of him, but rather, that he simply was not charging enough. While a lot of people want a deal, his price was already around half of what the local Honda shop would have charged. Some people tried to pay him in other ways, but Eric only accepts cash. He refuses to work for alcohol, saying that is the worst kind of payment, and besides he does not want to be known as the "Alcohol Mechanic." Today,



Eric's main livelihood is not made through working on Hondas; instead, he now considers it a hobby that he enjoys. He makes the majority of his money by fishing and as a heavy machine operator.



Figure 3.8 Eric's Shop

Eric's repair facility is across the road from his home, and it is one of three buildings located there. The other structures are quite common to many other residencies in the community. The first is a *banya* (steam bath), the second is a smokehouse, and the third is his shop that works as part carport and part shed. The shed portion includes a freezer for food, miscellaneous storage, and his parts inventory. Interestingly, his compressor and all his tools are all located in the open carport section. He uses his air tools to help take off tires and other light duty requirements. He also has an antiquated manual tire changer that requires a lot of physical work and can be dangerous to operate. Eric sometimes modifies tools himself to meet his needs and he estimates that he has invested around \$5000 in tools and equipment.

The fact that he is related to many people in Nanwalek complicates the matter further. As he explained, fixing Hondas in the village cannot really be run as a business because most everyone is family. Recently, Eric had gone to Anchorage for a month and half and upon returning to his home, he was welcomed back by his family, and was quickly put to work. His father's Honda had broken down at Waterfall. Eric pulled on his snowsuit over his travel clothes, grabbed his toolbox, got on his brother's Honda and headed up to Waterfall and began to diagnose the problem. The Honda was a recent model and Eric remarked, "The way these newer Hondas are built is ridiculous." It was not until he had disconnected the motor before he could identify the problem, which was a sheared bolt. Eric went back and got a drill and his retractor kit and he continued to fix the problem on location.

This repair occurred on a snowy February day and in a location a little over a mile from the village. His father's purpose for going to Waterfall was to get blocks of wood. Eric explained that the blocks were approximately 20 inches wide and 40 inches in diameter with an approximate cumulative weight of 300 pounds. That combined with his father's weight, the total load was probably over 550 pounds. His father, however, was not towing a trailer at the time that could have support between 400 and 500 pounds of wood. It is not uncommon for those in Nanwalek to use their Hondas for hauling and towing a half-ton (1000 pounds) of wood at a time.

### 3.6 Everyday Honda Realities in Nanwalek

It was not long after Eric had purchased his ATC 70 that consumer groups began to raise issues regarding safety. First generation Hondas, while safe in the hands of experienced riders, were dangerous to those that did not understand the unstable nature of the machines. These Hondas were prone to flipping, as well as sideway rollovers. By 1987, all production of three-wheelers ended, and they were replaced by four-wheeled versions. As a side note, this ban ended in 1997, yet no major company has decided to market or produce any new three-wheeled models.



Figure 3.9 Honda FourTrax

With such a wide popularity of these machines, it is natural that people want to customize their Hondas based on their own needs and tastes. Many people opt to add extras such as handlebar mittens, invest in Honda covers, install windshields, or fix a piece of plywood onto the back rack to make riding more comfortable for passengers. Recently, the application of stickers had become prevalent form of claiming ownership

over a machine, whether it was acquired brand new or used. Other popular modifications include the replacement of stock tires and wheels, the addition of lift and torque kits, and the installation of extra lights. Regarding lift kits to modify to ground clearance, Eric Kvasnikoff noted that this type of modification may result in costly repairs in regards to the boots and CV joints and he did not recommend it. He explained when one adds a lift-kit, the boots will eventually tear and moisture will negatively affect the internal parts. Additionally, the extra stress on the components would result in bending, that would lead to premature part failure and breakage. Eric noted that the factory clearance of the machines is plenty, and those efforts to add further height are largely pointless and ultimately counterproductive. He concluded that this type of modification is largely based on one's own personal tastes versus actual function.



Figure 3.10 Modified Honda

Normal maintenance of Hondas in the village include oil changes, various filter replacements, tire changes, brake adjustments, and the cleaning of starter brushes. The most common repairs are those that involve chokes, bearings, and the electrical system. Electronic relays and computer modules are prone to failure largely because of Nanwalek's coastal environment. Constant exposure to salty water is rarely kind to any vehicle but can be especially hard on ones that have exposed metal parts and wiring. For this reason, MT (manual) models are preferred over the ES (electric shift) or the AT (fully automatic) ones. Further, the ES and AT models include computer-controlled systems, which are much more difficult to fully repair and restore away from a certified Honda shop.

All of the fifty or so ATVs in the village are utility Honda models, except for six, which are Yamahas. Of the latter, one is the Yamaha Raptor, a sport ATV, and the other five are side-by-side models; four are Yamaha Rhinos and one is a Yamaha Viking. Sport ATVs have little purpose in the village. Most Hondas have five gears, but rarely do people drive above third gear. The average speed that Hondas are used is around twenty miles per hour. In Nanwalek, torque is much more important than horsepower. Torque is about work, while horsepower is about acceleration. It is not about how fast you can accelerate a Honda, but rather about the external loads that can be handled while using the machine. Furthermore, the only place one can quickly accelerate and utilize top-end speed is while racing down the 1800-foot foot airstrip, a ride that lasts

about thirty seconds and one that that is generally frowned upon by pilots, passengers, and parents.



Figure 3.11 Yamaha Rhino

Regarding the Yamaha Rhino, like other side-by-side models, it has improved ground clearance over standard ATVs, but is prone to high-centering due to its larger dimensions. On a positive note, they are generally easier to drive, designed to accommodate a passenger, have larger hauling capabilities, are less prone to weather conditions, and can be operated while wearing a skirt or dress. In contrast, on standard Hondas, women wearing skirts must ride sidesaddle. As Nanwalek is a single-denominational village where all locals are part of the Russian Orthodox Church, and where the custom dictates that all women and girls must wear long skirts when attending a religious ceremony, riding sidesaddle is an everyday challenge.

The most popular ATV models in Nanwalek are the Honda Foreman and Rancher. Both are powerful and fuel-efficient. Superior fuel efficiency in ATVs and outboards are mostly a “given” in Honda products. For those in the village, there is a shared understanding that while certain other manufacturers’ models may offer similar performance, Honda ATVs are thought to have better fuel efficiency and durability. This shared understanding makes them widely popular in the community.



Figure 3.12 Honda Rancher Ready for Fishing

### 3.7 Conclusions

When Honda engineer Osamu Takeuchi, began to develop the All-Terrain Cycle concept in 1967, he had no idea that in little over a generation that his machine would both revolutionize and sustain Sugpiaq and other Alaska Native communities. The use

of ATVs in the villages is not merely commonplace, but essential, as is the maintenance and eventual replacement of those machines. In Nanwalek, almost every family owns a Honda and drives the machine more than ten times a day. Those persons who enjoy prosperity above localized norms often own more than one ATV. In this sense, and similarly to sports and luxury vehicles, Hondas can be symbols of status and wealth in a community. Yet the adoption of Hondas has been, and is still currently, influenced by many factors, not simply by convenience and a way to show wealth. People were attracted to Hondas as they could help them to provide for their families in culturally specific ways and for this reason, using the machines made sense in their particular living environment.

Hondas are revolutionary in the fact that they have changed almost every aspect of life for those Native peoples living in rural Alaska. Fortunately, and due to people's active engagement with the process, they have changed it in a way that allows for increased participation in traditional life-ways and resource management. Before the settlement era, those in this area would subsist across a vast region so as not to deplete one area's natural resources. Moreover, they utilized familial ancestral lands for the purposes of harvesting subsistence resources and through this process they cultivated a strong sense of place and community. Sadly, many of the established norms of Alaska's Native peoples were lost through the colonizing efforts of Russia and the United States. Smaller groups and bands were brought together in population centers, and these concentrated communities were sedentary in nature. Through these acts of



communal reform and relocation, much history and heritage has been lost. Hondas, however, provide a means to connect with what went before. Oftentimes, this is a brief connection, but a real one nonetheless. Because of Hondas, many of the places that count are no longer merely fragments of one's past; rather, they are physical and contemporary locations of importance.

## Chapter 4: ATVs and Health Related Issues

### 4.1 Mobility and Modes of Transportation

Before the arrival of motorized vehicles, most people in Nanwalek used a skin boat, also called baidarka (kayak), *angyaq*, or walked. Walking was so prevalent that there are numerous stories about people walking from the various settlements on the outer coast to Nanwalek and Port Graham as part of the natural routine of hunting, fishing, and subsisting off the land. For example, Elders would regularly round up their grandchildren and lead them up nearby St. John Mountain for berry picking expeditions or down to the Yum-Yum Tree for catching and putting up fish. Even today, though not as often, these activities still take place. In fact, Elders remember their parents, aunts, and uncles walking from Port Graham to Nanwalek each Sunday to attend church services, and return again to their village on the same day. Walking, it appears, was a way of life (interview with Herman Moonin Jr., May 20, 2014).

Naturally, people have also been making use of water transportation routes along the coast since time immemorial. In addition to the kayaks that came in one, two, or three-hole varieties, skiffs, dories, and larger boats were also popular. Supposedly, three-hole kayaks were a Russian invention (Zimmerly 2000: 31); however, models dating back to late 1700s collected by Captain Vancouver in the Nanwalek Region (British Museum VAN -152) calls that claim into question.



Figure 4.1 Van-152 Vancouver Collection

Local people used traditional skin boats they built on a wooden frame and covered with skins, often sea lion or seal hides, as late as the 1960s. These kayaks were built for the user's body measurements, such as arm length and upper body height, etc. (Crowell et al. 2008: 146), and the skin, also called *laftak*, on them was carefully sewn with waterproof stitches. While Sugpiaq people used boats primarily travelling on the ocean, small boats were also utilized on lakes and rivers.

As mentioned previously, the first ATVs arrived to Nanwalek in the 1970s. By the mid-1980s, most families in the community owned an ATV. They became a norm a few years later when ATVs became extremely useful with the advent of four wheels and large racks. Knowing the timeline of when ATVs first arrived in rural communities, gained popularity, and became the norm is important in regards to the discussion of related health issues. By knowing this timeline, one can compare it with relevant health

data and trends in order to determine questions of validity regarding health impacts, to examine various assumptions, as well as to draw conclusions.

Health-related issues regarding ATV usage in Nanwalek and other communities can be broken down into two categories, chronic and preventable. The first group, chronic diseases, includes, in part, those things that are the consequent results of a lack of physical activity such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. The second one, preventable health issues, are things that originate from purchasing, maintaining, and riding the ATV, as for instance, cuts and abrasions, joint and eye injuries, and accidents in general. It should be pointed out that many chronic diseases are preventable, and in addition, some chronic health issues may be the result of injury such as osteoarthritis (eOrthopod website 2011). Hence, these two categories are not exclusive of one another.

#### 4.2 Chronic Health Issues

The most widespread assumption regarding the connection between Honda-usage and chronic health problems is that ATVs significantly contributed to the rise of chronic disease in the region. In general, this claim is based on the following two widely held perceptions. The first position holds that chronic diseases have risen since the introduction and acceptance of the machines, while the second, and most important one, argues that there is an established relationship between the chronic disease trend

and those periods when Hondas first became available, increased in popularity, and eventually became a norm.

By referring to the charts below, one can come to the following conclusions.

The first chart, Figure 4.2, shows that the body mass index (BMI) among Native Americans and Alaska Native adults with diabetes is on the rise. The second, Figure 4.3, shows that while obesity among Whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians has decreased, the rates have increased for Native American and Alaskan Native young children.

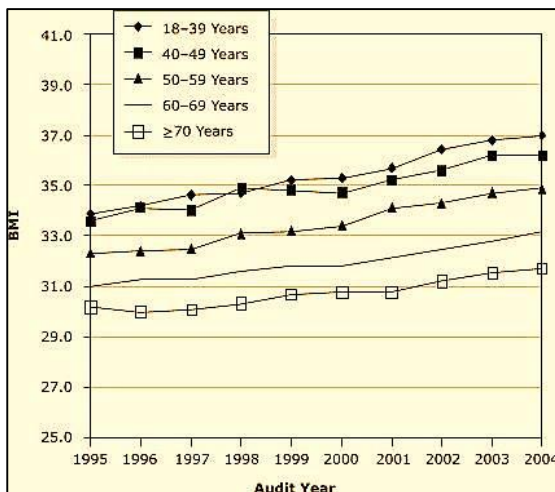


Figure 4.2 BMI Chart

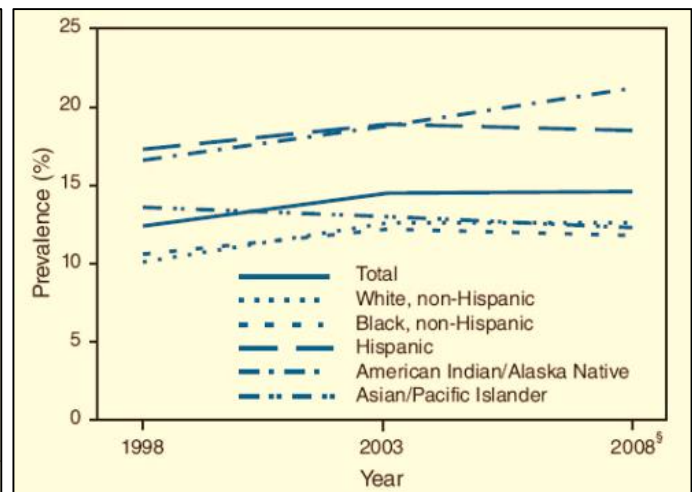


Figure 4.3 Obesity Chart

From the first chart, it is important to recognize we only have data spanning the ten-year period between 1995 and 2004, and it is not possible to conclude direct correlation between ATV usage and chronic diseases in Alaska. The only determination one can make is that of the rise of obesity among Native Americans and Alaskan Native

adults. The second chart is a little more telling. Clearly, Alaskan Native children ages two to four are not operating ATVs, or any other transportation. Yet, they are the only ethnic group that has seen a rise in obesity rates.

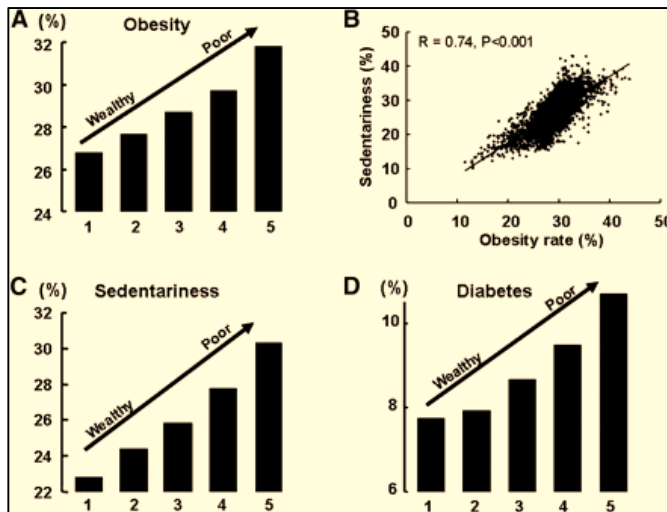


Figure 4.4 Four Square Chart

From the information provided by Figures 4.2 and 4.3, and corroborated in Figure 4.4 we can make conclude that the rise in obesity that leads to chronic diseases may not be directly related to ATVs, but rather it may suggest the possible lingering effects of poverty and delocalization. The mitigation, prevention, and treatment efforts of chronic diseases during the represented period, particularly diabetes and obesity, have largely been ineffective on personal, state, and federal levels. In fact, the largest deterrent to the onset of diabetes seems to be one's income and the lifestyle choices it can afford. This actuality is not very encouraging for those in Nanwalek, as shown in Figure 4.5, as

the per capita for those in the village are approximately a third of Alaskan and U.S. averages (State of Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development 2013).

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), those who are at risk of diabetes can prevent its development by making changes in diet and by increasing their level of physical activity. The ADA further contends that, “While the Diabetes Prevention Program also showed that some medications may delay the development of diabetes, diet and exercise worked better. Just thirty minutes a day of moderate physical activity, coupled with a 5-10% reduction in body weight, produced a 58% reduction in diabetes” (Raimo 2013).

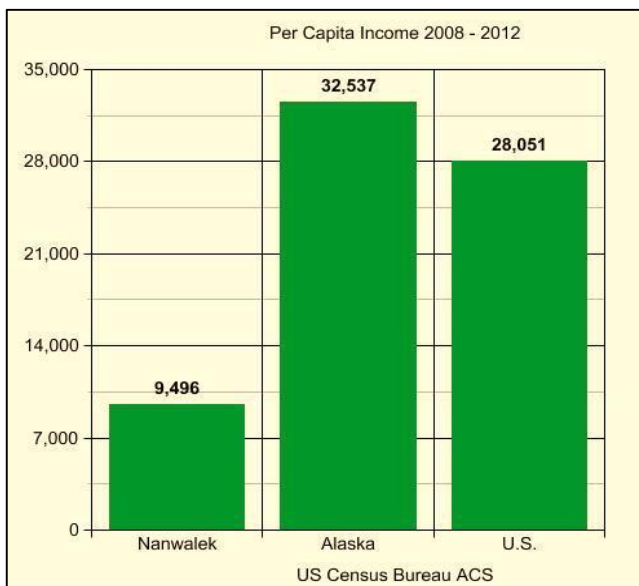


Figure 4.5 Nanwalek per Capita Income

Traditional foods may be the one thing of utmost importance in regards to obesity and subsequent chronic disease rates concerning Alaska Native peoples. In

many respects, wild foods are healthier than the various available processed foods sold in village stores. This benefit happens not only as a result consuming these foods, although they are certainly rich in nutrients, antioxidants, and healthy fats, but they also positively impact people through the procurement process itself. As *Healthy Alaskans* 2010 points out, “Regular physical activity protects against heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes, depression and anxiety” (Healthy Alaskans 2010: 3).



Figure 4.6 Subsistence Harvesting

For this reason, the process of subsistence harvesting should also be considered in the context of cultural relevance and identity. Tim Ingold (2000: 58) argues that, “the world as perceived by hunters and gatherers is constituted as such by virtue of their very mode of engagement with it, in the course of their everyday, subsistence-related



practices.” For those most affected, there is a constant need to negotiate between what to change and what to preserve. In order to successfully navigate the obstacles of the road leading to a decision, people need to go through a process that allows them to consider both the negative and positive aspects of the question in hand, and at the same time to follow their culturally specific practices regulating the procedure itself.

Unlike infectious diseases, chronic disease rates have been on the rise, and there is no indication that this trend will change in the next twenty years. The primary reason for this development is obesity. Obesity leads to other kinds of illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and osteoarthritis, among others. There are those people who are genetically predisposed to be obese; however, this is a very rare occurrence. The previous data suggests that what is happening in Alaska is similar to the occurrence of health issues throughout the United States and at similar rates. People are eating unhealthy foods at an increased rate while simultaneously becoming more sedentary. Therefore, those diseases mentioned previously will continue to rise to extraordinary rates until people make the decision and are given a viable choice with healthier foods and increased exercise.

The people of Nanwalek, as in most other Alaskan Native villages, have experienced steady changes in diet and lifestyle since the time of contact with Europeans. As I demonstrated, since the 1970s, ATVs were eagerly accepted and actively sought-after. Simultaneously, the notion that ATV usage is a significant factor in the rise of chronic diseases and preventable injury has also become prevalent. However, with

the data collected, no direct association could be found to support or negate this direct connection between ATVs and chronic disease. At the same time, the data did suggest a relationship between obesity in Native peoples and the results of Americanization, for example, changes in diet and an association between income and health. As the ADA cites the lack of physical activity as being a cause for the onset of diabetes, the following question arises: are ATVs a significant factor in the rise of diabetes in rural Alaska? The answer is probably no or, at least, not directly. One of the reasons is that ATV-usage is a physical activity in itself that is on par with walking, for instance.

While I was unable to find out exactly how many calories were burnt during ATV usage, I did locate the number of calories that were used while operating a snow-machine (Nutrstrategy website).

Table 4.1 Activity Chart

Activity (1 Hour)	130lbs	155lbs	190lbs
Calories Burnt:			
Snowmobiling	207	246	302
Walking, 2.0 mph, slow pace	148	176	216
Walking, 3.0 mph, moderate pace	207	246	302
Walking, 3.5 mph, uphill	354	422	518

For this discussion, I conjecture that ATVs and snow-machines are similar in this respect. Yet, an argument could be made that ATV usage actually burns more energy as the machines may require more in the way of balancing and overall driver encouragement and manipulations. Regardless, as seen from the offered data in table

4.1, whether walking or driving, the amount of energy needed to accomplish a task is similar. Moreover, the amount of calories needed to accomplish a task will rise, or fall, in direct relation to the physical exertion on the body. Hence, running will burn more calories than easy riding, while some trail riding will burn more calories than walking.

It should be noted that people often have different riding techniques and styles in the village. Most adults sit forward on the seat with a straight back, older kids often sit way back on the seat and lean forward, some women ride mainly side-saddle, and the more adventurous often drive standing up straddling the ATV or with one knee on the seat. The latter is popular on rough terrain or when the seat is wet. This driving position takes a lot of energy and strength.

The purpose of ATV usage is also an important factor in the impact it has on the users. Frequently, people in rural Alaska use ATVs to run to the store or to visit a friend. Just as often, ATVs are used for getting wood and other subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, or gathering berries. For these reasons, ATVs actually make such activities more convenient and may increase the harvesting and consumption of traditional foods. Nonetheless, ATV usage does come with a very real cost, both monetarily and physically.

#### 4.3 Preventable Health Issues

When ATVs were first offered in the early 1970s they had three wheels, a six horsepower – 89cc single cylinder engine, four-speed manual transmission, included a

swivel down handlebar so that one could fit it in a station wagon. The first generation ATV, the Honda ATC 90, had a weight of 192 pounds and cost \$595 (Figure 4.7). Adjusted for inflation, today's price would be approximately \$3100. Currently, the smallest mainstream utility ATV is the 18 horsepower – 229cc Honda Recon; it weighs 432 pounds and cost \$3949. The largest single-person utility ATV on the market today is the Can-Am Outlander 1000 XT-P (Figure 4.8). The Outlander has an 82 horsepower – 976cc engine, weighs over 750 pounds and costs approximately \$13,000. I did not offer any comparisons to side-by-side UTVs as they are not really similar to ATVs.



Figure 4.7 Honda ATC 90



Figure 4.8 Can-Am Outlander 1000

Similarly to many rural villages, the current (2014) price of gasoline in Nanwalek is \$7 per gallon. Most ATV gas tanks have an average capacity of between three to five gallons. The result is a cost of \$21 to \$35 every time someone needs to fill up. The

perception is that ATVs are extremely fuel-efficient modes of transportation. In reality, the average of fuel economy of all 2011 ATV and UTV models was 39 miles per gallon (Giacchino 2014). Actually, this is a pretty respectable figure, but it is important to remember that the biggest factor to fuel economy is how the machines are driven and in what conditions.

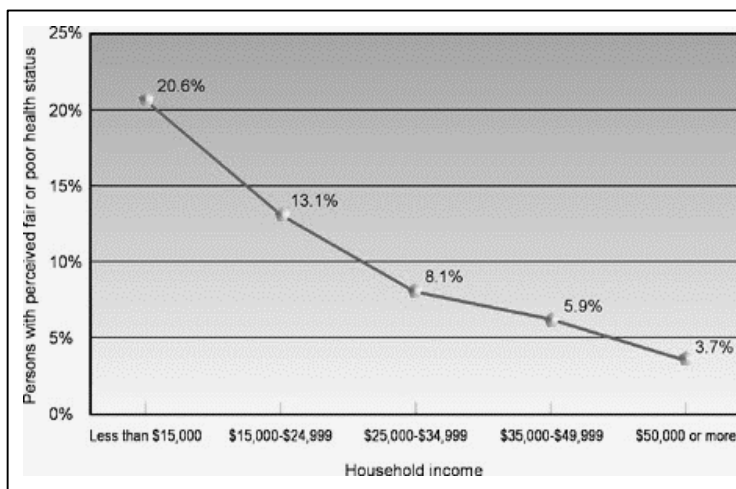


Figure 4.9 Health to Income Chart

The sheer cost of buying and maintaining these machines can be a burden for those in Nanwalek and elsewhere in rural Alaska, but as they are now a norm, ATVs have also become a near necessity. As shown in Figures 4.5 and 4.9, one of the greatest risk factors in regards to diabetes and poor health in general is having a low income. Without argument, personal wealth is one of the principal deterrents to disease, illness, and chronic health issues. The costs associated with ATV usage is a causal health issue as it can put individuals into a high-risk status due to the amount of wealth necessary to

maintain proper health. Nonetheless, it should also be noted that the ATVs of today offer improved safety features, increased torque and horsepower for work, and reliability when compared to initial models.

All in all, ATVs have become more reliable over the past thirty years due to a series of design and development changes. Yet, whether or not these changes fully compensate for the increase in the weight and power of the machines is debatable. When compared to the initial models, current ATVs have, in part, larger chasses, improved brakes, and better overall handling. Additionally, ATV dealers are now required to offer a free training session. According to a 2004 Rider Training Summary from the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission 2006), 65% of first-time buyers and 93% of all purchasers declined this free training session. Moreover, there are now industry standards as well as some state laws that assert the need for age limits on ATV usage. For instance, those between the ages of 6 and 11 should only operate ATVs under 70cc, and those under the age of 12 should operate machines 90cc and less, and so on.

One state that actually enacted a legislation regarding age limits is Kentucky. As a result, the fatalities sustained by riders under 12 years of age as well as those between the ages of 12 and 16 have dropped by approximately fifty-percent in 2004 (ATV Safety Institute website). In fact, according to the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, there was a proportional 31% decline in ATV related deaths between the period of 1988 and 2002. While this seems to be good news, statistics can be deceiving. Although there had

been a relative decrease of ATV related deaths between 1988 and 2002 of 31%, during the same period, there had also been an increase of ATV ownership by 110%; the end result being a much larger number of people who died of ATV-related incidents in 2002 than in 1988.

In 2003, it is estimated that 740 died from ATV related incidents (ATV Safety Institute website). As we can see from Figure 4.10, hospital stays reached a ceiling in 2004 and have leveled off through the rest of the study in 2009 (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality website). In 2004, there were 136,100 hospital emergency room-treated ATV injuries, though it should be noted, there was probably an equal amount of non-emergency ATV injury-related visits to doctor offices (ATV Safety Institute website).

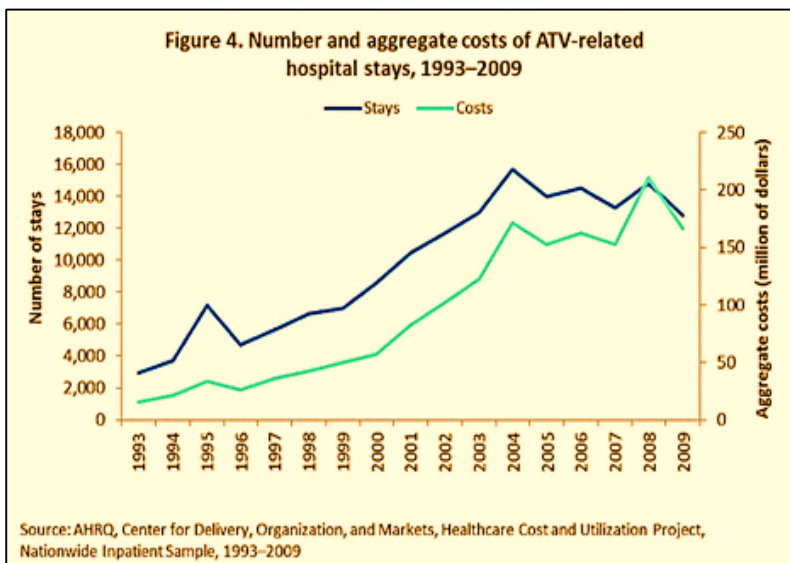


Figure 4.10 ATVs and Hospital Costs

According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), in 2000, more than 254,000 ATV-related injuries were treated in hospitals or doctor's offices. Of these, 40% were children under the age of 16. The costs of these injuries totaled 6.5 billion dollars in medical, legal, and work loss expenses (American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons website). It is important to remember that these expenses are not all inclusive, as they do not include the subsequent outcomes of these injuries, namely, osteoarthritis. In a 2000 study, published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers looked at medical students graduating from John Hopkins University between 1948 and 1964. The study compared those who had a previous hip or knee joint injury at the average age of 16, versus those who did not. They concluded that those who received knee and hip injuries by the average age of 16 were twice as likely to develop osteoarthritis later in life (eOrthopod website 2011).

An AAOS Public Service Announcement states, "If you must ride an ATV, use your head – the right way" (American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons website). What this PSA is referring to are the several interrelated aspects of ATV ownership. This includes operating a machine that one is comfortable with and taking the free training being offered by dealerships.



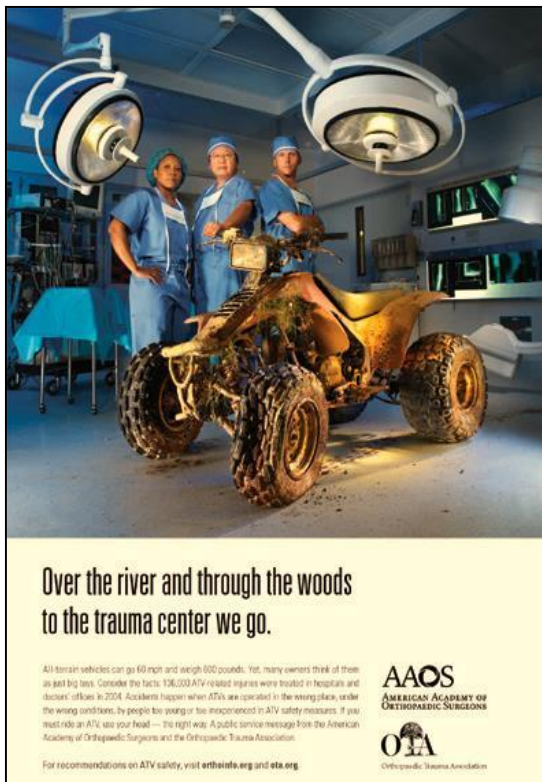


Figure 4.11 AAOS PSA

Further, owners need to practice on their ATVs in order to have the skills necessary while making turns, managing slopes, and, balancing the machine. Reckless driving by unskilled operators is the number one cause of ATV accidents. A close second, 30% of all fatal ATV accidents, involve drivers who were under the influence of alcohol (American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons website). Additionally, most ATVs are designed for a single user, and the addition of a passenger negatively affects the way the machine handles on slopes and around curves, with the most common result being rollovers.

Nonetheless, comfort zones, training, practicing, driving sober, and riding within the machine's abilities are not the only deterrents in regards to the unsafe use of ATVs. Rather, another aspect that needs to be considered is that of suitable clothing. ATV riders need something to protect their eyes from flying rocks, low hanging branches, as well as the occasional insect. Ideally, this would include approved goggles. Using such safety gear is rare in rural Alaskan communities, but the regular use of sunglasses is very common in most villages. Riding with any form of eye protection would offer a marked improvement in regards to decreased rates of eye injuries. In this same fashion, using proper clothing while riding ATVs can also provide a marked improvement towards safer practices. This, for instance, includes the use of gloves throughout the year, as gloves accomplish three things. Firstly, they protect the hands from cuts and abrasions, secondly, they improve the driver's grip on the controls, and lastly, they absorb some of the shock from the machine while reducing soreness.

A recent two-year study, conducted in Puerto Rico included 33 ATV accident victims who required 46 orthopedic surgeries. Of these, 63% of their injuries were to the legs (eOrthopod website 2011). This statistic only emphasizes the fact that ATVs should only be ridden while wearing long pants, or more specifically, heavy cotton jeans or similar heavy-duty materials. Also of importance is footwear, as ATVs should never be operated with open shoes, like "croc's" or sandals. The ideal footwear is appropriate boots that support the ankles while also protecting the feet from trail debris. Being able

to keep one's feet suitably placed on the footboards is also necessary for maintaining balance and overall control of the vehicle.

According to a study performed from 1995 to 2001 in cooperation with one of Ohio's major pediatric trauma centers, there were no significant differences in mean injury severity scores between helmeted and non-helmeted child riders. The study concluded that helmet usage was not associated with a reduction in head/facial injuries (Gittelman et al. 2006). Perhaps a reason for this is that major head injuries are often fatal and that accident victims are more likely to be taken to a morgue than to a trauma center.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

ATV usage has many health benefits to those in Nanwalek and rural Alaska, including that it is an enjoyable activity that can reduce stress. Further and on par, ATV usage is a calorie-burning physical activity equal to a brisk walk and one that often occurs in conjunction with other physical activities, for example, getting wood or subsistence harvesting. The subsequent result is an increased consumption of healthier traditional foods. However, as discussed, healthy living is often not an inexpensive endeavor and may take up a considerable percentage of one's income.

As shown earlier, according to the AAOS, four out of ten doctor-treated ATV accidents involved children under the age of 16. This was, in large part, due to children riding adult-size ATVs (American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons website). If it was

mandated by law and enforced by various agencies that children ride age-appropriate machines, this statistic could have been cut in half. Also, such accidents at an early age can be life altering, as both massive and simple joint damage can develop into osteoarthritis at a later time.

There are several negative aspects of ATV usage in regards to related health issues as well. However, and notwithstanding immediate valid health concerns such as preventable injuries, it is not possible to evaluate the health effects of ATV usage on Nanwalek's population in isolation from other relevant socioeconomic factors. Using ATVs is now embedded in the everyday life of the village, as people experiment with the ever-evolving machines, evaluate their usefulness, and adapt them to their current life-ways.

## Chapter 5: From Delocalization to Relocalization

### 5.1 Adaptive Range

Consider for a moment the following notion: what has happened is evident and predictable and what has not happened is inherently not. While this seems obvious, it underscores the need to look at the notion of socio-ecological systems differently. One consideration that should be taken into account in regards to fostering more resilient systems is the possible vulnerabilities of those systems. Vulnerability is explained as, “the degree in which a system is likely to experience harm due to exposure to a specific hazard or stress” (Chapin and Kofinas 2009: 62). A social-ecological system is one in which social systems and ecological systems are interlinked. As Folke points out, “A human society may show great ability to cope with change and adapt if analyzed only through the social dimension lens. But such an adaptation may be at the expense of changes in the capacity of ecosystems to sustain the adaptation” (Folke 2006: 260).

Folke goes on to explain that the process of adaptation “may generate traps and breakpoints in the resilience of a social–ecological system” (Folke 2006: 260). Within the social-ecological system framework, resilience is defined as, “the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks” (Holling et al 2010: 426). The concept is derived from an idea C.S. Holling in which he concludes, “hence, the useful measure of resilience was the size of the stability domains, or, more

meaningfully, the amount of disturbance a system can take before its controls shift to another set of variables and relationships that dominate another stability region. And the relevant focus is not on constancy but on the variability, not on statistically easy collection and analysis for data but statistically difficult and unfamiliar ones” (Holling et al 2010: 426). The aforementioned, “the relevant focus is not on the constancy but on variability,” made me wonder why, when similar groups are faced with the similar disturbances, some succeed, while others do not? Is there some set of variables that one group has that the others do not, which makes them more adapt at managing disturbances? By looking at disturbances as force, and system variability as energy, it may be possible for one to better recognize the factors.

I would like to offer my own brief understanding on the principles of energy, force, and the governed relationship between the two in regards to resilience. First, energy is absorbed and conserved until it is converted, the outcome being predictable. Secondly, force is that which causes a body of mass, in this case a system, to accelerate or change (Mansfield and Sullivan 2011: 35). If one recognizes force as an actor in the scheme, then one also accepts that it must act in accordance to certain physical laws. Energy is governed by these laws, such as, “the total energy of a system does not change with time; its value depends on the frame of reference” (Bergmann 1993: 215).

The consideration of energy and force, as well as their relationship to each other, may be very important to the concept of resiliency, whether it is ecological, social or a combination of the two. The term ‘resilience’ comes from Latin and means to ‘spring

back' and it is synonymous with elasticity (Ward & Lock 2012: 119). As reasoned, the choices made by a cultural group are often determined by social and geographical boundaries. Within the socio-ecological framework, resilience is defined as, "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, identity, and feedbacks" (Walker et al.: 2004).

It is through the concept of resiliency that the relationship between force and energy might be examined in a social context. A system is said to be elastic if it deforms under stress, such as force, and then returns to its original shape when the stress is removed. Robert Hooke, in 1678, stated this simply: as the extension, so is the force (Kumar 2005: 963). In the 1800s, the physicist Carlo Alberto Castigliano, added the Law of Conservation to the equation. He stated that external work done equals internal energy stored. Here, it is important to note that physics defines work as force times the distance through which it acts. Castigliano reasoned that, "when forces act on elastic systems subject to small displacements, the displacement corresponding to any force collinear with the force is equal of the partial derivative to the total strain energy with respect to that force" (Marghitu 2001: 163). This includes the notion of positive displacement as "in the same direction as the force" (Hartog 1961: 134). It is through Castigliano's method that engineers are able to calculate at which point a system, such as a bridge, is most vulnerable to failure.

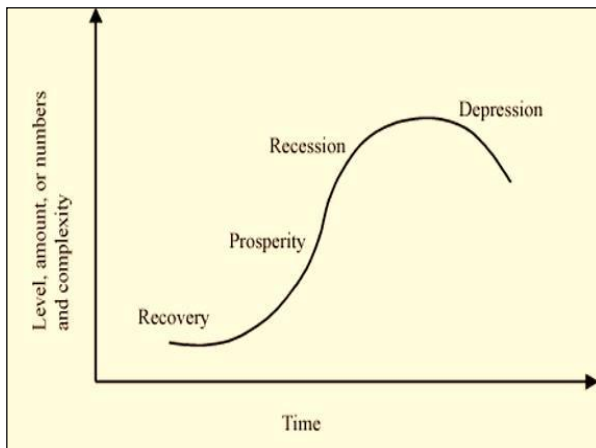


Figure 5.1 Kondratiev Cycle

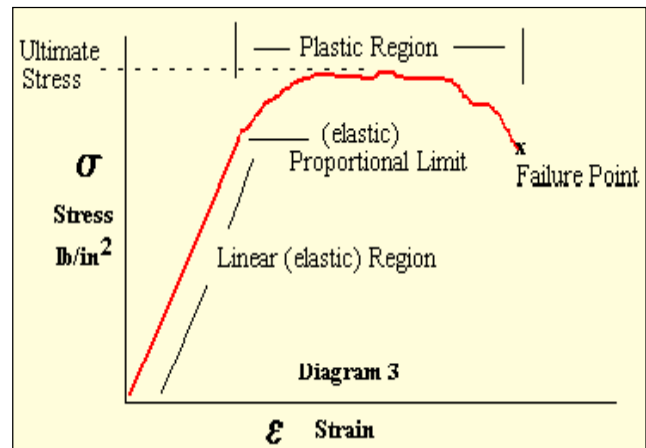


Figure 5.2 Hooke's Law/Young's Modulus

After having an elementary understanding of force, energy, and their relationships, next, I wanted to turn to finding a way to test whether any of my ideas were valid or relevant. I went back to the literature and noticed that many of the represented resilience graphs were similar to those I had come across in the research of my approach that deals with energy and force.

This comparison is of the relationship between current resilience concepts and the offered approach based on elasticity. The first illustration, Figure 5.1, is heuristic model of the Kondratiev Cycle. The second, Figure 5.2, is from the University of Wisconsin and is defined as another form of Hooke's Law, i.e. Young's Modulus = Stress/Strain.

For this new approach, we would need to look at resilience through an adaptive range versus and adaptive cycle. This is represented as the Linear Region in Figure 5.2. Further, I believe, it corresponds to the reality of a system in a truer fashion; namely, it



would have a beginning and an end, the latter being the point where transformation occurs. And lastly, Holling's adaptive cycle requires there be a constant flow into one cycle from the previous and at predetermined speeds. At this point, I should ask, "Why does growth always lead to conservation, and why at nearly the same time in each cycle?" In the real world, sometimes a system gets stuck or even goes backwards. Moreover, this is not always a bad thing, as systems sometimes need to do this in order to adapt. Evolution theory asserts that evolution is not unidirectional in time; hence, it is puzzling why most people feel the need to symbolize adaptability in such a fashion. Further, let us remember one of the laws of energy we previously discussed, "the total energy of a system does not change with time, its value depends on the frame of reference" (Bergmann 1993: 215). In basic terms, using "range," versus "cycle," may allow for a more accurate representation.

The current approach of the resilience perspective seems to be that the system just kind of sits there being bombarded by disturbances and reorganizes itself accordingly and when, or if, the forces become too great, the system is transformed. It is little wonder that people may be troubled by this perspective, especially, when discussing the resilience of cultural groups. This may have those members within the group feel that they are being portrayed as weak and victimized by their own system's inadequacies. In the approach I offer, and as explained through Castigliano's method, "the system" is an active participant and of equal importance to the disturbances.

Looking at adaptability as a range and using Levi-Strauss's (1968:22) idea of bricolage, which is the notion that compact cultural groups often "make creative and resourceful use of whatever materials are to hand," we can start investigating the introduction of new technologies into compact societies. Examining this process of negotiation through boundary-based decision-making, it becomes possible to gain a clear understanding of the importance of relocalization and ascertain its implications in future change for communities. Further, the benefits of a boundary-based decision-making system include the fact that it is collective in nature and the participation in these activities help to reinforce a sense of ethnic identity.

## 5.2 Ethnic Identity

As discussed previously, The Sugpiat of Nanwalek experienced decades of colonial rule that eventually led to a period of limited self-rule. Similarly, the people inhabiting Kachemak Bay, like other Native groups, have gone from being written about in travel journals and academic literature to being active producers of culturally significant art, media, and research programs that not only participate in scholarly discussion but also help shape the contemporary image of Sugpiat people.

The available literature on the topic of ethnicity is not lacking. For the purpose of this discussion, I feel the most useful definition of ethnicity is offered by Maybury-Lewis who compares ethnicity to kinship. He explains ethnicity as an idea that people have of one another based on the feeling that they are in some ways related to one

another, thereby recognizing others as belonging to the same group or community and, essentially, having the belief they share a common history (Maybury-Lewis 1965).

Another significant contributor to the topic of ethnicity, Fredrik Barth, explained that ethnic boundaries “entail a frequently quite complex organization of behavior and social relations. The identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgment. It thus entails the assumption that the two are fundamentally ‘playing the same game’” (Barth 1998: 15). As noted, while it is understood that for those outside the cultural group full membership within said group is unrealistic, it should also be remembered that this is, in fact, not the goal. The ambition for those working with compact cultural groups should not be inclusion; rather, the goal is to earn a majority of the group’s respect through the understanding of, and abiding by, the “rules of the game.”

### 5.3 Community Membership

Jonathan Ellerby discusses the need for finding those within a community that can provide information that accurately reflects that community’s beliefs and tradition, as well as, to include those views that are largely socially accepted and respected. Ellerby, in his text *Working with Aboriginal Elders* explains what an Elder is and explores the deeper meaning and classification of an Elder. He argues there are three general overall distinctions regarding Elders. First an Elder is one that lends his/her help to the community, secondly, an Elder can be a healer, and lastly, an Elder is a teacher. The

author notes that to be an Elder one must not be of a certain gender or age; but rather, to be defined as such by the community. Elders often believe that the quality of a person is demonstrated through their actions for the larger community, and it is according to the community's opinion by which a person will ultimately be judged.

Established members of a group are the ones who teach younger generations, in part, about their ancestors, significant events, and places that count. It is through this education that one is able to relate to people, places, and experiences on a personal level. It is through this culturally controlled activity that an identity is formed. In exploring changes in the Saami conceptualization of ethnic identity overtime and in relation the notion of culture, Trond Thuen (2004: 101) concludes that people have a great deal of ingenuity in making use of their heritage to help them adjust to the modern world, in particular "traditions that [are] useful in coping with their environment." In this fashion, what it means to be part of a specific ethnic group on the local level is influenced by the reinterpretation of what has been passed down through what is happening in the present. Therefore, it is always a personal, relevant, and shared experience. When a group is asked to forgo what is traditionally held in high regard by assigning symbols of aspiration that have no personal or communal significance, the result is often a breakdown within that group.

This often occurs when Elders and culture-bearers have no experiences to share. They cannot share their personal stories of hunting and fishing at historical sites of significance if they themselves have not been to these sites. An example of this

delocalization may be found in those communities in which the majority of its members no longer participate in available subsistence activities, opting instead to rely primarily on outside agencies for food and other necessities. When local people no longer connect with previously significant sites through their cultural logic they no longer look at stories as meaningful carriers of cultural knowledge that helped their ancestors survive. When this occurs, often established beliefs and behavioral norms began to waver, which in turn, leads to further stresses on the group. Gordon Pullar explains, “Many believe that a loss of heritage and ethnic identity has made it difficult to feel pride in who they are as Native people. This condition produces a loss of self-esteem that is manifested in self-destructive behavior such as alcohol abuse, family violence, and suicide” (Pullar 1992).

The use of ATVs has allowed for increased access to traditional sites for use and reflection. I argue that through relocation many of the activities and “places that count” are not just memories; rather they are purposeful re-interpretations of previous traditions.

Phillip Bock (1969) makes a case that it is through traditions that ideologies are fashioned and eventually standardized. The presentation of tradition through storytelling is embedded in cultural groups and is often offered in response to a contemporary problem or situation. Storytelling provides the opportunity to speak of things and events that have occurred in the past as a passive, versus active, participant

or witness. Oral histories have brought, and still bring, culture groups together in shared understandings and a collective reality that is necessary for a group's survival.

Harold Napoleon asserts, "...living elders must tell all they know, tell their experiences, because theirs are the experiences of the whole village, whether or not the whole village is aware of them or not" (Napoleon 1996: 25). In kind, John Red Horse explains, "...a recapture of discipline requires elders to help young people put their animosities into perspective – They must recapture the spiritual continuity of the past, present and future" (Red Horse 1980: 490). In short, the survival of a cultural group is reliant upon the passage of that group's norms, ideals, and traditions to new members within the community. The learning of these norms and traditions by new members is just as important as their creation and modification.

Gary Green and Anna Haines define the term, community, "as including three elements: (a) territory or place, (b) social organizations or institutions that provide regular interaction among residents, and (c) social interaction on matters concerning a common interest" (Green and Haines 2002: 3). While I do not disagree with the authors' assertions, I prefer the definition as offered by Fowler and Salter: a community is a group of "self-defined peoples" (King 2003: 6).

With the current, rapidly growing, population trend in Nanwalek growth and development are also highly relevant concepts that should be considered. Green and Haines look at "growth" as "increased quantities of specific phenomena [which can] be used to refer to changes in quality" while the definition of development, "involves

structural change” (Green and Haines 2002: 4). The authors further elaborate that “one of the primary goals of community development is to make the local economy less vulnerable to shifts in production technology and in the market environment” (Green and Haines 2002: 4). They go on to clarify that development versus growth may lead to more efficient uses of local resources and capital, while simultaneously reducing the need to involve external bureaucracies, thereby creating a more representative, and subsequently sustainable, system. In this regard, Green and Haines argue that there is a stark difference between community development and community growth. Growth can occur regardless of the intentions of the people or community, while development is a direct result of the decisions of members within the group. In this regard, relocalization is an internal response that develops from stresses placed upon a system with active input from members of a community. In comparison, Pelto defined delocalization in terms of dependency on outside technological and energy resources in production that can bring about the eventual collapse of a social system.

#### 5.4 Delocalization and its Principles

As mentioned, Pelto focused on the extreme stratification of society that would alienate family members from one another and engender unbridgeable status differences within cultural groups (Pelto 1987: in Preface, no page number). Tim Ingold’s (1976b: 146) critique of Pelto pointed out that this one-dimensional

interpretation of the effects of technological change indicated that Pelto was “unable to distinguish between wealth, status and prestige.”

Interestingly, Pelto declared he took a different approach when he wrote *The Snowmobile Revolution*, suggesting that because of his rising interest in the ecological approach to the conditions of human behavior, he would rely heavily on the works of Bennett, Geertz, Rappaport, and Vayda. As he explains, “My frame of reference for this study, then, is a general ecological orientation, within which I treat human cultural behavior as a heterogeneous and flexible system of adaptive responses” (Pelto 1987: 11). However, the text largely does not reference these works, nor does it seem that the author’s orientation is wholly ecological in nature; rather, he mostly depends on the theories of Marx, Engels, and Wolf, and as such, materialism.

Pelto suggests it was the snowmobile revolution that pushed the Skolts into a “tailspin of cash dependency, debt, and unemployment” (Rogers 1995: 406). These are more commonly known as the, ‘evils of capitalism.’ According to Marx, the ‘evils of capitalism’ could be overcome, in part, by the replacement of private property with common ownership and by abolishing wage labor. Regardless, but not totally apart from the aforementioned, once Pelto identified the problems, he made five suggestions, “in the interest of Skolt economic self-sufficiency” (170). The idea of self-sufficiency, as understood by Marx and Engels, was the period before ‘established national industries’ were destroyed through, “intercourse in every direction, and universal inter-dependence of nations” (Marx and Engels 1848: 476). Interestingly,



Ingold also focused on the significance of creating a healthy economy for Skolt reindeer herders in the hopes that it would “allow opportunities for constructive self-expression and personal fulfillment according to values held by the people themselves” (Ingold 1976b: 253). This suggestion was in stark contrast with Pelto’s, which focused on creating a ‘traditional’ reindeer herding lifestyle that was chiefly based on his own presumptions.

The suggestions Pelto made were a smaller reindeer association limited only to Skolts, fencing off Skolt reindeer ranges, modifications to pens and corrals, a return to non-mechanized reindeer herding, and lastly, a cooperative system of subsistence in which, “The reindeer meat that is produced through the activities of the minority of reindeer herding families should be available cheaply to the non-herding families of the region” (Pelto 1987). He also argued such an activity could be possible if subsidized by the Finnish government. In Marxist theory, subsidizing is important in the creation of equality as it makes up for lost monies that would otherwise come from profit. Curiously, Pelto argued while relying on gas to run snowmobiles was perceived as dependency, relying on the government’s money to subsidize reindeer meat was hailed as independence and a step towards self-sufficiency.

Pelto also paid a great deal of attention to discussing kinship and familial control of reindeer herds. Eric Wolf explained that political power was frequently kin-based, and for this reason, inequalities and conflicts often arose when the importance of the family-unit was replaced by increased reliance on land governance and outside labor regarding

agricultural and herding efforts (Bodley 1997). In the end, most of Peltó's suggestions were ignored by those in the Sevettijärvi and those in the Finnish government (Peltó 1987: Postscript)

While keeping with Marxist theory, and focusing on explaining the problems of a cultural group from a materialistic point of view, Peltó made the mistake of not taking into account other aspects of culture, including the most basic characteristics of all: cultures change and adapt. He started his research from a particular bias founded on his personal relationship with one Skolt member mourning what he perceived as the complete loss of tradition. In addition to his personal bias, he also did not recognize the capacity of the Skolt to transform their notion of 'Sámi-ness' over time. Further, he entered the field with an activist approach in wanting to bring about social and political change from the outside, and not understanding that this can only happen, outside violent control and oppression, on the local level through members of the group.

At times, when anthropologists come to 'help' or 'heal,' they commonly do so based on their own understanding of the present. However, when this occurs, often much of that culture's recent and distant past is not taken into account, or worse, taken out of context regarding current situations. This disconnect between the outsider and communal thought, as discussed earlier, has led to research efforts that have been lacking in sensitivity to the actual needs of the group. The role of the researcher is not to advocate or defend, but it is to produce a product in partnership with local community that is wanted and useful.

I should note that there is disagreement regarding the role of the social researcher. Speed argues, “...the critical engagement brought about by activist research is both necessary and productive. Such research can contribute to transforming the discipline by addressing the politics of knowledge production and working to decolonize our research process” (Speed 2006: 66). Contrary to Speed’s view, I argue that activist research can be another form of colonizing the research process, i.e. the great anthropologist riding into the village to save the day.

Here it should be noted that this is not always the case, studies that are performed within the concepts of community-based participatory research are becoming more and more frequent. However, and as noted, many researchers still often forget they have an outsider status and that they are guests to an otherwise established social structure and that they have no right to speak for the good of the community or its individual members. The exception to this of course is when asked or directed to do so by those within the community, though this can also be a ‘slippery slope’ as individual members of the cultural group that are working with researchers may in fact not represent the larger community.

## 5.5 From Sámi to Sugpiaq

There are a lot of similarities between the Sugpiat of Nanwalek who participated in this study and those of the Skolt Saami currently living in the proximity of Lake Inari in the villages of Sevettijärvi, Kerajärvi, and Nellim who assisted Pelto. Lake Inari is

Finland's third largest lake, covering 647 square miles. Like the Sugpiat, Skolt Saami people also experienced Russian colonization. In 1945, their traditional homeland was split into two, with one half belonging to Finland and the other to the Soviet Union – presently the Russian Federation. With the split, many of those Skolts living in the Petsamo Region moved to their current locations. The Skolts are considered to be the indigenous people of the Petsamo Region of northeastern Russia and belong to the Skolt Sámi language family. According to Michael Krauss, as of 1995 there were approximately 900 Skolts, 400 in Russia and 500 in Finland. Of those, around 400 could still speak Skolt Sámi, but it was not mentioned at what level. Of those speakers, 20 to 30 were members of the Russian population, 300 of the Finnish population, with the rest made up of those individuals who now reside in other countries (Gordon 2005). Correspondingly, Frank Horn of the University of Lapland wrote in 2004 that of approximately 900 Inari Sámi, a third (ca. 350 persons) speak Inari Sámi and of the approximately 600 Orthodox Skolt Sámi, some 400 persons speak the language (Horn 2004).

By comparison, Krauss also released the findings of a study he did in 2007 suggesting that of the approximately 3500 Alutiiq Sugpiaq people there are about 200 that still spoke the language (Krauss 2007). Regarding the Nanwalek Sugpiaq specifically, I observed in 2012 that approximately 40%, roughly 50 people, of the adult population still use Sugt'stun in everyday conversation. Like the Skolt Sámi, the Nanwalek Sugpiat are also exclusively Russian Orthodox in religious affiliation. Both in

Nanwalek and in the Sevettijärvi region, traditional language and storytelling is being taught in the school and through after school programs that concentrated on traditional singing, dancing, and local histories.

Naturally, there are also differences between these two indigenous groups living in opposite sides of the Arctic. The addition of tourism to an already diverse Skolt economy became possible in the late 1960s, when the region was connected to the road system. This continued and expanded when a road to the Norwegian coastal city of Kirkenes opened in the 1970s. According to the *InariLapland* website, currently in the Sevettijärvi region there are approximately 20 to 25 guest cabins, two restaurants, a hotel, bar, store, taxi services, and various souvenir shops, which sale local crafts as well as reindeer products. Further, it appears that all these businesses are owned by local members of the communities and not by outside tourism operators. In comparison, Nanwalek has no road access, and as a result experience both negative social impacts, such as a lack of jobs, supplies, and timely medical care and positive social impacts, such as control over incoming population. Unlike the Nanwalek Sugpiat, the Skolt Sámi are affected by out-migration, especially by women. Both communities share an increased reliance on outside governmental bureaucracies in the form of housing programs and various entitlements.

According to the Inari Lapland website, one similar to a U.S. Chamber of Commerce site, most families in Sevettijärvi make their living from both a monetary and barter economy with the reliance on reindeer herding, fishing, berry picking and tourism

(Sammenmaan Kylat website). The Skolt Sámi have always been diversified in regards to their subsistence but with similar elements such as reindeer husbandry and hunting, hunting for other game, fishing, and various gathering activities. The Sugpiat of Nanwalek have also been, and continue to be, active in subsistence practices. Children learn about locally available subsistence foods through traditional knowledge that instructs them how, when, where, and why to hunt, fish, and gather. Similar to their Skolt counterparts, Sugpiaq children are also instructed in proper ways of interacting with their group and the environment such as offering their first catch up to Elders and sharing with other members of the community. While the Skolt Saami lives are center on reindeer herding, the Sugpiat lives turn towards the ocean and are largely governed by what is found there. Yet this inland-marine lifestyles difference does not distract from the similarities the two ethnic groups experienced in terms of technological change and the challenges of adaptation.



Figure 5.3 Sugpiaq Subsistence

The revival of Sugpiaq language, culture, and life-ways was, in part, brought about by largely from local participation in ANCSA and repatriation. In the Sevettijärvi region the Skolt Act achieved similar results. Passed in 1984, the Act created laws and decrees that would promote and protect Skolt culture and occupations. In accordance with these efforts, in 1993 the 'Skolt Language Nest' was initiated as an experiment. The 'Nest' serves as a daycare and as a place where the elderly and other Skolt speakers can come together. All the activities in the center are conducted in Skolt. While there was no particular center dedicated to Sugpiaq culture, the late 1990s saw the establishment of an Immersion School in Nanwalek, where the only language children and staff spoke was Sugt'stun.

Although Nanwalek is part of Chugach Alaska Corporation, and the community has cultural ties with all of the other three Sugpiaq-Alutiiq regions as well as Dena'ina, Tlingit, Eyak and Yup'ik people, the village's population has always stood somewhat apart from the rest of the Sugpiaq-Alutiiq population. This separation is partially due to being the most traditional Sugpiaq community in the region. This fact is reflected in the village's young fluent Sugt'stun speakers being in their 40s, as well as simultaneously being a single denomination Russian Orthodox Sugpiaq community. Interestingly, the Skolt Sami had comparable experiences.

There are, of course, many other examples of 'cultural revivalism' on both Skolt and Sugpiaq sides. These are mostly driven as grassroots initiatives, and start out by a handful of participants on a local level. They can vary from simple acts of including their

own languages, Skolt and Sugt'stun respectively, in Orthodox Church services and prayers, or using it through media outlets such as Facebook, newsletters, radio programs, magazines, and other forms of broadcasting. There are also various heritage preservation initiatives that largely focus on passing down traditional knowledge to young adults and children in an educational setting that is conducive to localized learning.

In the case of these two compact cultural groups, the Skolt and the Sugpiat, the decision to accept ATVs and snowmobiles was negotiated through a localized system of boundaries. As Goodenough's timeless analysis of change on a community level points out, "what a community needs for its development is not so much a matter of fact as a matter to be negotiated" (Goodenough 1963: 58). When defined ecological, cultural, and spiritual boundaries exist, and the majority of a group share, understand, and respect these boundaries, they make up the foundation in which the majority of decisions are made. Similar to boundary-based decision-making, anthropologist Levi-Strauss (1968) put forth his interpretation of bricolage in that compact cultural groups make imaginative and resourceful use of a great variety of materials they have access to in order to solve problems. In the fields of economics and psychology, the same principle is referenced as bounded rationality. Herbert Simon proposed his notion of bounded rationality that, in part, states, "...property of an agent behaves in a manner that is nearly optimal with respect to its goals as its resources will allow" (Simon 1957). Likewise, the concept of realistic or bounded rational decision-making is used in both



the fields of organizational behavior and urban planning, “... the decision that is taken is rational but is taken in a bounded area and the choice of alternatives is though not perfect is nearer to the perfect decision” (Brooks 2002: 82). Similar notions are also found in the fields of sociology, criminology, marketing, and cultural studies, among others. While each theory is slightly different, they share a common theme, namely, that cultural groups, along with its individual members, largely base their decisions on the social milieu as well as on the group’s perceived limitations and realities.

## Chapter 6: Discussion and Summary

### 6.1 Decision Making and Relocalization

By the mid-1980s, the lifestyle of the Skolt Sámi had changed in ways that Peltó never imagined. Peltó suggests this was caused by the introduction of snowmobiles, in conjunction with the completion of a road system. In a more recent epilogue, he explained that when the village of Sevettijärvi became a part of this road system, the younger people became more interested in acquiring automobiles than snowmobiles. He further argued that the road system allowed for new stores along the road and as a result, the shopping patterns of the Skolt changed. Other changes by the mid-1980s included the governmental subsidized housing programs, electricity, and additional westernized modernizations.

In 1987, Peltó wrote, “During the past 15 years, since I wrote this book, the Sevettijärvi herders have achieved a new system of reindeer management.” The new system included, in part, different types of enclosures and fences, feeding hay, and earmarking calves earlier in the season. Many of these new techniques were actually derived from other areas of Lapland. Further, from 1970s to the 1980s the number of herders in the Naatamo Association did not decline, but remained steady (Peltó 1987).

Peltó explained that because of technological innovations in passive control (barriers and fences) and through supplemental feeding, a return to non-mechanized reindeer and the development of reindeer herding dogs were not needed. However, he

went on to note that, “Just as the snowmobile brought about a massive de-localization in terms of reliance on outside energy sources, the solutions to the problems required considerable reliance on further de-localization – the importing of additional technical features and materials” (Pelto 1987).

Since 1973, Pelto’s ‘de-localization’ theory has been periodically cited in publications. Again, the ‘de-localization theory’ being, “...The tendency for any territorially defined population to become increasingly dependent on resources, information flow and socioeconomic linkages with systems of energy and resources outside their particular area.” Ray Barnhardt visited the concept when he co-authored a paper, originally presented in 1981 at a *Specialty Conference* in Seattle, *The Northern Community – A Search for A Quality Environment*. In this paper he discussed de-localization within a rural educational framework, “The de-localized school, because its design is not congruent with the local cultural configurations regarding space and appearance, essentially becomes a huge alien physical island in the community. It is not of the community, and thus seldom becomes part of the community in any meaningful sense” (Barnhardt and Dubbs 1981: 145). In 2000, Ludger Müller-Wille, cited Pelto in the article, *From Reindeer Stew to Pizza: The Displacement of Local Food Resources in Sapmi, Northernmost Europe*, looking at local food-ways. “These concepts are applied to show the emerging local dependency on external resources and the resulting displacement of local food resources with respect to their importance and values economically and culturally for Sámi Society” (Müller-Wille 2001: 89). While I have little doubt that the

phenomenon of delocalization is real, I also believe it is but one side of the coin. When we turn that coin over, another reality presents itself. Snowmobiles, like Hondas, were not forced upon the local population; rather, they were sought after as they could provide solutions to specific and ongoing problems.

When Eric Kvasnikoff remarked in a previous chapter that his village would have no difficulty in switching brands, if a brand that better suits their needs came along, he indeed means the majority of the village. The notion of boundary-based decision-making is central in regards to how choices are made in Nanwalek. It should be recognized that these choices are not based on availability. Items on the local store's shelves have become dusty and outdated, simply because they were not the 'right' brand. People would rather go without a certain product, be it soy sauce or a Honda, than purchase the wrong brand. From their point of view, it makes no sense to spend money on something that is not the 'real deal.' It would not only be a waste of money, but also an active act of acquiring something that one neither wants or needs.

In this sense, the people of Nanwalek most often collectively agree certain 'things' are better than others, and subsequently actively seek these items out. Some examples include the specific brands and types of footwear, coffee makers, wall clocks, soda, cigarettes, chainsaws, vodka, and the previously mentioned soy sauce, among many others. Deviation from the locally established brands is often looked upon as bizarre and quickly marks one as being 'silly' or an outsider. However, informal experimentation with other brands does occur with the results being the replacement

of a former brand, the addition of the brand in the collective choice options, or, failure of the brand, and subsequently, light ridicule for the person who suggested it.

#### 6.1.1 Woodstove Story



Figure 6.1 Stove for Cooking and Heat

When we first arrived to Nanwalek, we came with a woodstove. We had bought it on our trip down from Fairbanks knowing the house we needed to remodel required one. It was a Jotul stove and the primary reason for purchasing it was that it was light enough for my wife and I to manhandle. We needed something that we could put in our little U-Haul and be able to move it around if the need arose. The salesperson at the

stove store told us it would be plenty large enough for our application and the stove included a cooktop. After arriving in Homer, we unloaded the U-Haul at Homer Air and over the next few days, all our belongings were flown into Nanwalek.

As we had no idea on how to install a woodstove, we asked one of Wally's sons to help us. Upon seeing our stove, Emerson asked seriously, "Is that it?" After we explained that yes, indeed this was it, and while proudly showing off the cooktop, he simply replied, "Can you take it back and get a Blaze King?" I assured him our little stove would work just fine to which he replied, "I don't know guys." In retrospect, a lot of people told us, "I don't know guys," those initial months. He eventually installed the stove for us and no doubt had fun telling his wife and all his friends about these silly people who got the wrong kind of wood stove. And it was the wrong stove; the wood had to be cut small, which resulted in shorter burn times and twice as much work. Further, it would not burn through the night which meant either waking up at 4 am to load the stove or waking up to 40 degree temperatures in the morning. We battled with that stove the entire time we lived in Nanwalek. Not surprisingly, as soon as we left and the house was turned over to a new family, the stove was taken out and an 'approved' model was installed. I believe the Jotul stove now resides in a little cabin on Second Lake.

Out of this failure came eventual success. By the time our first winter was over, my back was a mess, as was my wife's shoulder. Every day was a battle of getting wood. I would drive up the trail, cut blocks, load blocks, drive home, then chop blocks, and then

my wife would chop the blocks some more – if only we had listened, “Can you take it back?” Through this experience I found out the importance of a good chainsaw and an even better axe. My first chainsaw was a joke, and I quickly traded up for a Stihl at the suggestion of those in the village. My first good axe was a heavy fiberglass model, again at the suggestion of those around me. While it was great for chopping, it eventually wore us out so when we returned to Nanwalek, I sought a better alternative. I settled on a Fiskars axe I found on Amazon. It had over a 1000 reviews and a five-star rating, it promised a light handle and a sharp edge, so I figured it was worth a shot. Long story short, we loved that axe. I asked Wally if he wanted to take a few swings, and he also liked it immediately. He liked it so much so that he bought one, then his son bought one, his brother bought two, then his nephew and so on. Now the village is full of Fiskars axes. The challenge was to keep ours well marked so it would not end up “walking away” accidentally. We all picked specific colors of duct tape and wound strips around the handle. Ours has Hello Kitty on it.

All in all, understanding the logic behind decision-making reinforces the idea that to succeed within one’s own society, one must know the ever-changing customs and traditions of that society. Without this process, it would not be possible to relocalize core concepts and ideas of a cultural group by using new technologies in culturally specific way through adaptation.

## 6.2 Relocalizing the Notion of Sustainability

Regarding subsistence in relation to sustainability, the available texts do not clearly define what sustainability is, simply because they cannot. Sustainability has many different meanings largely based around whatever it is that is trying to be sustained, as for instance the environment, culture, political institutions, etc. For clarification, when I use the term *sustainability* I am using a broad definition as offered by the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development, "[to] meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). According to Green, before the term sustainability became popular, the phrase steady-state economies were widely used. As he explains, "population growth and production growth must not put us beyond the sustainable environmental capacities of resource regeneration and waste absorption. Therefore, once that point is reached, production and reproduction should be for replacement only. Physical growth should cease, while qualitative improvements continue" (Green and Haines 2002: 189). Through my research, I have come to the following related conclusions on this topic: the environment and its resources are assets. Assets can be used for the development and sustainability of a community. A contradiction between sustainability and development exists when these resources are over-utilized and exploited for the purposes of unattainable or exclusionary growth, monetary or otherwise.



In itself, the term *sustainability* is a strange concept. The meaning of it is often based upon the field of study by which it is defined and no two fields ever exactly agree with the other. The definition of subsistence is often equally ambiguous. The definition of what subsistence is remains difficult and differs greatly not only between outsiders and Native peoples, but within Native groups as well. In the text, *Subsistence: A Child's Eye View of a Rich Cultural Heritage*, MacLean defines the term 'subsistence' according to a variety of Native groups as the following: Aleut – 'Those things that keep us alive' and Tlingit – 'Working for the things that will be in and around your mouth', these definitions are practical and descriptive. We can compare these to the more political and spiritual definitions of other Alaskan Indigenous groups: Siberian Yupik – 'Way of life' and Yu'pik – 'Our way of being' (MacLean et al. 1998: 7). Ironically, one could argue the latter definitions are more Western in nature, as seen with the use of the anthropological terms, such as 'way of being.' In essence, and based on a series of group decisions, these groups are using Western expressions in the hope that outsiders would have a better understanding of their situation.

Often, there are misunderstandings between outsiders and Native peoples when it comes to subsistence activities. Ilarion Merculieff in a speech given to the Conference of Hunting and Gathering Societies expanded on the idea regarding this lack of understanding between groups in regards to subsistence noted that often, "well-intentioned, well-meaning mainstream individuals in positions of power, authority or of professional standing in the westernized institutions throughout the world" couldn't

communicate well while dealing with Indigenous groups (Mercurieff 1990: 3). He goes on to argue that cross-cultural communication breaks down when people do not understand that each comes from a different worldview. The actress K.D. Lang, while filming the movie, *Salmon Berries*, commented that she couldn't understand why the Iñupiat did not fly all their food in instead of hunting animals. She did not understand, as Rupert Ross explains, "the hunter-gatherer did his shopping in the natural world" (Ross 2006: 81).

As I discussed, the adoption of Hondas in Nanwalek did not change the traditional mode of gathering wood. Men still go up the trail in pairs, they still teach the younger generation about selecting different wood species and pieces for different tasks, and they still help Elders and others in need by making sure they have enough wood to burn. The main difference is that now they ride up on the trail on Hondas instead of walking. In a sense, Hondas became an essential tool for them, a part of their adaptive toolkit.

In a series of negotiations, people in Nanwalek made the decision that Hondas, when all things were considered, were a useful addition to their everyday lives, and for this reason they incorporated the machines into their subsistence practices according to their own understandings. From their own, insider point of view, Hondas, guns, fishing gear, and chainsaws require just as much attention in maintenance as traditional tools carved or created from materials available in the local environment. However, when new technologies do not live up to people's expectations, they simply reject them

and stay with their original choice of tools. For instance, when Wally and Nina showed me how to prepare baidarkis (*Katharina tunicata*) for the first time, they dropped the baidarkis into a large pot then Nina poured steaming hot water over them while Wally proceeded to smash them with the end of tree branch he got out of his woodshed. As Nina is an avid cook and huge fan of kitchen gadgetry, Wally could have used any number of heavy mashers and utensils. But as he explained, mashing the baidarkis with the wood will soften them up and make it easier to clean.



Figure 6.2 Preparing Baidarkis

Additionally, new technologies do not completely replace old ones in totality. For example, people still make traditional hunting equipment, baskets, and clothing for ritual purposes using traditional materials sourced locally from nature, despite the fact

that they have guns, large plastic bowls, and synthetic parkas. According to their assessment, these items have their place in their lives side-by-side, overlapping, and sometimes, interchangeably replacing one another.

### 6.3 Relocalization through Adaptation

My experiences resemble those of Ann Fienup-Riordan's description of her first experience in the Yup'ik village of Toksook Bay in 1976. "Snow machines were a luxury that not everyone could afford, and all-terrain vehicles were nonexistent. The harvest of fish and game on which people depended required cash both for fuel and capital equipment. But in everything I experienced, from the spring seal parties to the midwinter exchange dances, the cash economy was clearly at the service of a distinctly Yup'ik way of life rather than the other way around" (Fienup-Riordan 2000: 156). Interestingly, this was the same year Pertti Peltto was given notice of an impending 'doom' regarding the introduction of this technology to Skolt culture. While Fienup-Riordan's conclusions took adaptation into account, thereby shedding light onto Yup'ik people's active success in shaping their lives to accommodate their changing realities, Peltto's focused on the influences of an outside force, depicting Skolts as passive victims of a brave new world they cannot cope with.

Naturally, this lack of comprehension is not exclusive to newcomers and outsiders but also often entrenched governmental and institutional bureaucracies. Such an example is demonstrated by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, which often

ignores Indigenous Knowledge completely or inserts Indigenous Knowledge language into their subsistence policy only after the Board of Game and Board of Fisheries have already decided upon forthcoming regulations.

For instance, Fienup-Riordan described the case of placing geese hunting limits on Nelson Island in order to protect what the Fish and Game perceived as declining population due to over harvesting. Yet the local perception rejected this view and asserted that the lower numbers of geese is due to the lack of respect shown to the birds by biologists when studying the waterfowl during the nesting season (Fienup-Riordan 1990: 177). Traditional subsistence understandings are often defined by a history that is endangered for many Native groups and more or less lost to the outsider. When these understandings are not taken into consideration, outside agencies end up regulating subsistence activities based on what they do not know, rather than what they do.

These challenges, along with others such as cultural and technological change, are impacts that can be observed in the process of adaptation. As I explained, I prefer to use the notion of adaptive range in order to better understand the process of dealing with an event that places stress on a compact cultural group. In his study on *Technology and Culture*, Batteau (2010: 86) states that, “one characteristic of technology is its restlessness, its continual seeking of new configurations, new problems, new contexts, and new uses.” While I agree with the general argument that technology is always in flux, I reject his analogy of sapient technology. As Basso (1996: 67) points out, “it is

individuals, not social institutions, who make and act on cultural meanings.” Similarly, it is not technology that is restless and always seeking new configurations, rather it is people who are always ready and prepared to acquire, evaluate, and decide on new technologies as they become available to them. Ingold and Hallam (2007: 19) points out that “Improvisation and creativity [...] are intrinsic to the very processes of social and cultural life,” and as such, they are part of what humans do whether they are part of a compact or a large cultural group. However, due to its size, by looking at what people do in compact cultural groups, we can develop a better grasp of processes that we can apply in other situations.

For instance, by looking at the adaptation of Hondas to the community of Nanwalek as a force on the system and through the notion of adaptive range, we can understand some of the effects to the community and its members. In the 1970s, when Hondas first appeared in Nanwalek there was a new stress on their cultural system which was caused by the arrival of ATVs. People however quickly adopted the use of the machines into their everyday life, by only suspecting, but not really knowing, the kind of effects they may have. As they gained more and more experience with this particular technology, they adjusted their own pattern of use and creatively incorporated Hondas into their overall cultural toolbox. Further, this pattern of use and incorporation has changed in relation to how the technology itself has changed.

Honda usage did not simply proceed according to a predetermined cycle; rather, it was influenced by human responses to ongoing and continual new disturbances

affecting the system. For example, when people had an overflow of cash due to the cleanup work after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, many of them purchased new Hondas regardless of the functionality of their already existing machines. But when leaner times came, they went back to their previously discarded, overlooked, and/or neglected machines to use them either for parts or to repair them for daily use. In this instance, a portion of the system not only slowed down, but went backwards for a short period of time. Likewise, when a new segment of the technology was offered, i.e. Side x Side UTV models, there was a trial period within the system where standard ATV usage remained the same while UTV saw an initial period of increased use followed by eventual decrease. When using the notion of adaptive range, we can accommodate for a great variety of movements within the system as well as for human responses to new disturbances that also influence previous decisions.

#### 6.4 Relocalization of the Places that Count

As I note through the previous chapters, there are many health concerns associated with Honda usage. Further concerns also include diminished air and water quality, habitat destruction, solid and hazardous material waste, noise control and abatement, possible damage to historic and archeological sites as well as other ecological concerns. However, it should be noted that the people of Nanwalek accept these risks. In contrast to previously noted arguments that regard the introduction of new technologies as, at least in part, the underlying factor in the decline of a particular

cultural group, I have found, in my own personal experiences, the opposite. In the case of Nanwalek, Hondas make those areas of traditional importance, which were at one time largely remote, accessible. These include, in part, subsistence and harvest areas, Native allotments, as well as previous settlements.

Ingold, writing about the Pitnupi of Western Australia, highlights the connection between the landscape of the ancestors and the landscape people travel today, “On the land travelled by the ancestors [...], people make their way on the temporal domain of ordinary life, pursuing their own everyday activities. Though the paths they take are not constrained to the lines of ancestral travel, in following tracks (as in hunting) and in making tracks themselves they replicate the original, creative movement of the ancestral beings, inscribing their own identities into the land as they go” (Ingold 2000: 53). Like Fienup-Riordan (1990), Ingold also concludes that while the anthropological interpretation of places usually focus on either on the practical-technical or on the mytho-religious interactions with the environment, reality does not reflect such separation. When people go out hunting on a Honda, they still follow trails and apply knowledge they have learned through traditional, experiential education. They know where to go, how to get there, what landscape features to use in navigation, and what to watch out for. The cultural and personal significance of a place does not diminish just because people now travel there by Hondas. Further, as Pullar pointed out earlier in the dissertation, it is important to remember that while previous settlements are often not occupied on a permanent basis, people still often return to them regularly for a variety



of reasons including subsistence activities. In this sense, and as I have argued, ATVs makes participation in those activities not only easier but also more likely.

Elenore McMullen (1997) of Port Graham remembers her parents always being on the move, always going from one place to another. Similarly, Elders in Nanwalek talk about their parents and grandparents moving from one place to another according to the season. In the 1920s and 30s people worked at a commercial sawmill in the area of Port Chatham during the winter and came to stay in Nanwalek for the summer. Nanwalek was the place to garden and put up fish. The nearby cannery in Port Graham also offered summer employment. In fact, people would often walk in groups from Nanwalek to Port Graham in the morning to work and then back again at night. According to Nina Kvasnikoff, people would also walk from Port Chatham to Dogfish as well as to Flat Island, etc., but again usually in groups (interview, March 24, 2014). As mentioned, walking was a way of life.

Today, however many of the places could not be reached or visited regularly without the help of Hondas. People just do not have the time to walk as they used to and they do not have the flexibility to stay away from the village for weeks at time like their ancestors did. For a while, people stopped visiting some of these places and the collective knowledge about them went dormant. It existed in stories and ancestral histories, but few had any personal experiences to share. When the Hondas came along, people went looking for this dormant information, tracking it down, reviving it, and placing it into their minds and sharing it with others.

## 6.5 Summary

At the beginning of this dissertation I sought to answer numerous questions. These include, “How have subsistence practices have changed in Nanwalek, how the community and its individual members makes the decision to accept a new technology, and further, what are the possible ramifications of doing so.” As I demonstrated, the adaptation of Hondas have made it possible for the Nanwalek Sugpiat to reconnect with those places that were important to them culturally and historically. Their active participation in this process firmly put them in the center of their ancestors’ world. As many of the previous authors suggested, when visiting these places, people are able to see, touch, smell, taste, hear, sense, and in general, feel those things that their ancestors felt. Naturally, everybody, even members of the same community, experience places in different ways, as Basso clarifies, “A variety of experience, sense of place also represents a culling of experience. It is what accrued – and never stops accruing – from lives spent sensing places [...and...] a sense of place is inseparable from the ideas that inform it” (Basso 1996: 144).

In relocation, I take the theory of delocalization and turn it around. While delocalization is focused on increasing dependency of a cultural group on outside resources due to the acceptance of a new technology, in relocation, I argue that the introduction of new technologies may increase participation in those activities of traditional importance. This includes excursions to established subsistence sites,

familial allotments as well as previously active settlements. Further, Honda usage, like snowmobile usage, allows for subsistence activities over a larger region instead of concentrated sections. As discussed, this assures not only increased yields in regards to the activity itself but also appropriate resource management. The benefits are not only collective in nature, but they also include the internalizations of one's own cultural identity through participation in these activities. This connection, this relocalization, is real and may be brought about in a variety of means. Through this act of rekindling connection to places that was once, and now again significant, the process of relocalization commences. It is people's decisions that set relocalization into motion, and it is the culturally specific knowledge embedded in collective memories that make it possible for cultural revivalism to gain momentum.

By applying the previously discussed notion of boundary based decision-making, I believe it is important to recognize the role the community, and its individual members, play in the process of accepting and employing a new technology. Relocalization demonstrates that the adoption of new technologies by a compact culture group does not automatically necessitate the simultaneous adoption of the foreign culture that invented the technology and the concurrent desertion of one's own traditions. In fact, through the application of the notion of adaptive range, it becomes clear that quite the opposite may be the reality. Simply put, when local people find usefulness in new technologies, they often make it a part of their life under their own terms.

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## Appendix



### Institutional Review Board

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December 17, 2009

To: S. Craig Gerlach, PhD  
Principal Investigator

From: Bridget Watson  
Research Integrity Administrator  
Office of Research Integrity

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Watson'.

Re: IRB Protocol Application

Thank you for submitting the IRB protocol application identified below. This protocol has been administratively reviewed and determined to meet the requirements specified in the federal regulations regarding human subjects' protections for exempt research under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) for research involving the use of educational test, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside of the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Protocol #: 09-60

Title: *Honda Country: Change in an Alaskan Village*

Level: Exempt

Received: December 2, 2009

Exemption Date: December 17, 2009

*If there are major changes to the scope of research or personnel involved on the project, please contact the Office of Research Integrity. Email us at [fyirb@uaf.edu](mailto:fyirb@uaf.edu) or call 474-7800. Contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding IRB policies or procedures.*



UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS